MONDAY
December 22, 2025

BENGALURU
CITY EDITION
20 Pages ₹ 6.00

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RNI No. KARENG/1970/49945

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Cong. protects illegal migrants in Assam: PM

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Snowfall brings joy in Kashmir

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SHANTI Bill rushed for Trump, Adani: Cong.

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AIR POLLUTION CONTROL

Lessons from China

India can draw on the principles that made China's progress possible

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DOMINANT DISPLAY

Australia wins third Test, keeps the urn

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Meat shop owner in U.P. attacked on suspicion of carrying beef

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Two people were arrested in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, on Sunday after a meat shop owner was attacked on suspicion of transporting beef, the police said.

Shareef Qureshi was allegedly attacked while transporting meat to his shop on his motorcycle on Saturday.

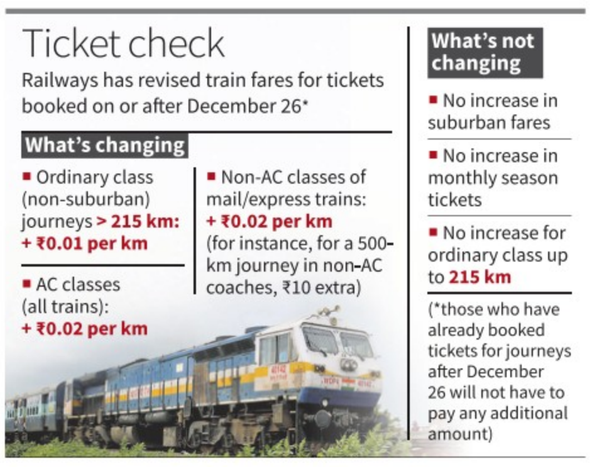
His family alleged that the accused had torn his valid meat purchase documents and thereafter assaulted him, claiming he was carrying beef.

Opposition parties such as the Congress and Samajwadi Party criticised the government for poor law and order and targeted attacks on minorities.

FIR registered

"On the basis of a complaint by the victim, a first information report [FIR] was registered at the Harduaganj police station against seven named and many unidentified people. A sample of the seized meat has been sent to a laboratory for examination. Two persons were arrested," the Aligarh Police said in a statement.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10



Railways to hike fare from December 26; Cong. slams decision

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

With the aim of mobilising ₹600 crore, the Railways will increase train ticket fare by one paisa per km for journeys in ordinary class beyond 215 km, and two paise per km for non-air-conditioned classes of mail or express trains and AC classes of all trains with efffect from December 26.

The Congress criticised the hike, and alleged that instead of announcing it in the Budget, the government had used an unauthorised method to implement the decision.

"There is no increase in the monthly season tickets of suburban trains and up to 215 km travel in ordinary class of other trains," a note circulated to presspersons said. "Railways will earn about ₹600 crore this year as a result of this rationalisation. For a 500-km journey in non-AC coaches, passengers will have to pay only ₹10 extra," it added.

Those who have already booked tickets for journeys after December 26 will not have to pay any additional amount, a Railway Ministry official said.

Criticising the move, Congress leader Pawan Khera said the note was being unofficially circulated to presspersons. "Government increasing fares just before the annual budget is one thing, doing it surreptitiously is a new low even by the lowest standards set by [Prime Minister Narendra] Modi," he said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

Keeping a close watch on Bangladesh events: India

Centre expresses 'strong concern' over the safety of minority communities in the neighbouring country, dismisses reports in the Dhaka media about threats to Bangladesh's diplomats in India

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

India on Sunday described the killing of a Hindu youth in Bangladesh as a "horrendous act", and expressed "strong concern" about the safety of minority communities in the neighbouring country.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal dismissed media reports in Dhaka about threats to Bangladesh's diplomats in India, terming them "misleading propaganda". The Ministry's remarks drew a quick response, with the Foreign Affairs Adviser of the interim Bangladesh government, Touhid Hossein, saying "such incidents occur in all countries" of the South Asian region and that Bangladesh had already arrested several suspects in the case.

Dipu Chandra Das, 25, was lynched in Mymensingh city on Thursday amid the protests following the death of student leader, Sharif Osman Hadi. The mob allegedly hanged the youth's body from a tree and set it on fire.

"India continues to keep a close watch on the evolving situation in Bangladesh. Our officials remain in touch with Bangladesh authorities and have conveyed to them our strong concerns at the attacks on minorities. We have also urged that the perpetrators of the barbaric killing of Das be brought to justice," Mr. Jaiswal said.

Taking a stance: Students during a silent protest in Dhaka on Sunday to condemn the killing of a Hindu youth, Dipu Chandra Das, in Mymensingh. AFP

Responding to the reports published in multiple news outlets in Bangladesh about an incident outside the High Commission of Bangladesh here, Mr. Jaiswal said, "The fact is that about 20-25 youth gathered in front of the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi on December 20 and raised slogans in protest against the horrendous killing of Dipu Chandra Das in Mymensingh, while also calling for the protection of all minorities in Bangladesh."

Earlier, *Amar Desh,* a newspaper edited by prominent journalist Mahmudur Rahman, had published a report with the headline "Threat to kill High Commissioner in Delhi". The report said a group of men belonging to the Akhand Hindu Sena had come to the main gate of the Bangladesh High Commission in Chanakyapuri's Radhakrishnan Marg and held an "aggressive" demonstration.

The sharp exchanges took place even as India announced that the Indian Visa Application Centre in Chittagong and the main Indian Visa Application Centre in Dhaka will remain shuttered indefinitely.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

NEARBY

Local leaders blamed for confusion

KALABURAGI/BENGALURU
With a section of the Congress leaders hoping that the high command will bring an end to the confusion caused by the tussle over leadership, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday — without naming anyone — blamed the local leaders for having created the confusion. "Congress high command has not created any confusion. It is some leaders in the State [Congress] who are doing it," Mr. Kharge said.

» PAGE 6

Vehicles continue to flout ban on highway

BENGALURU
Despite a clear ban, two-wheelers and autorickshaws continue to enter the main carriageway of the Bengaluru–Mysuru access-controlled highway, raising serious safety concerns among regular users of the stretch. » PAGE 2

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 3

President grants assent to rural employment Bill; govt. lists four focus areas for works

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday gave assent to the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, which replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) enacted by the erstwhile Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government.

The new Act brings structural changes to the scheme while increasing the number of guaranteed days of work from 100 to 125, the Centre said.

Amid widespread criticism, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan released a video message, defending the new legislation. He criticised attempts to "mislead" the nation and create "confusion" in the name of the MGNREGA.

"Viksit Bharat-G Ram G is a step forward from MGNREGA," Mr. Chouhan said, emphasising that provisions for unemployment allowance have been strengthened in the law.

There are provisions for penalty for delay in wages, he said, adding a budget of ₹1,51,282 crore has been reserved under the scheme for comprehensive development of villages.

Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan defended the new legislation describing it as the forward step from MGNREGA

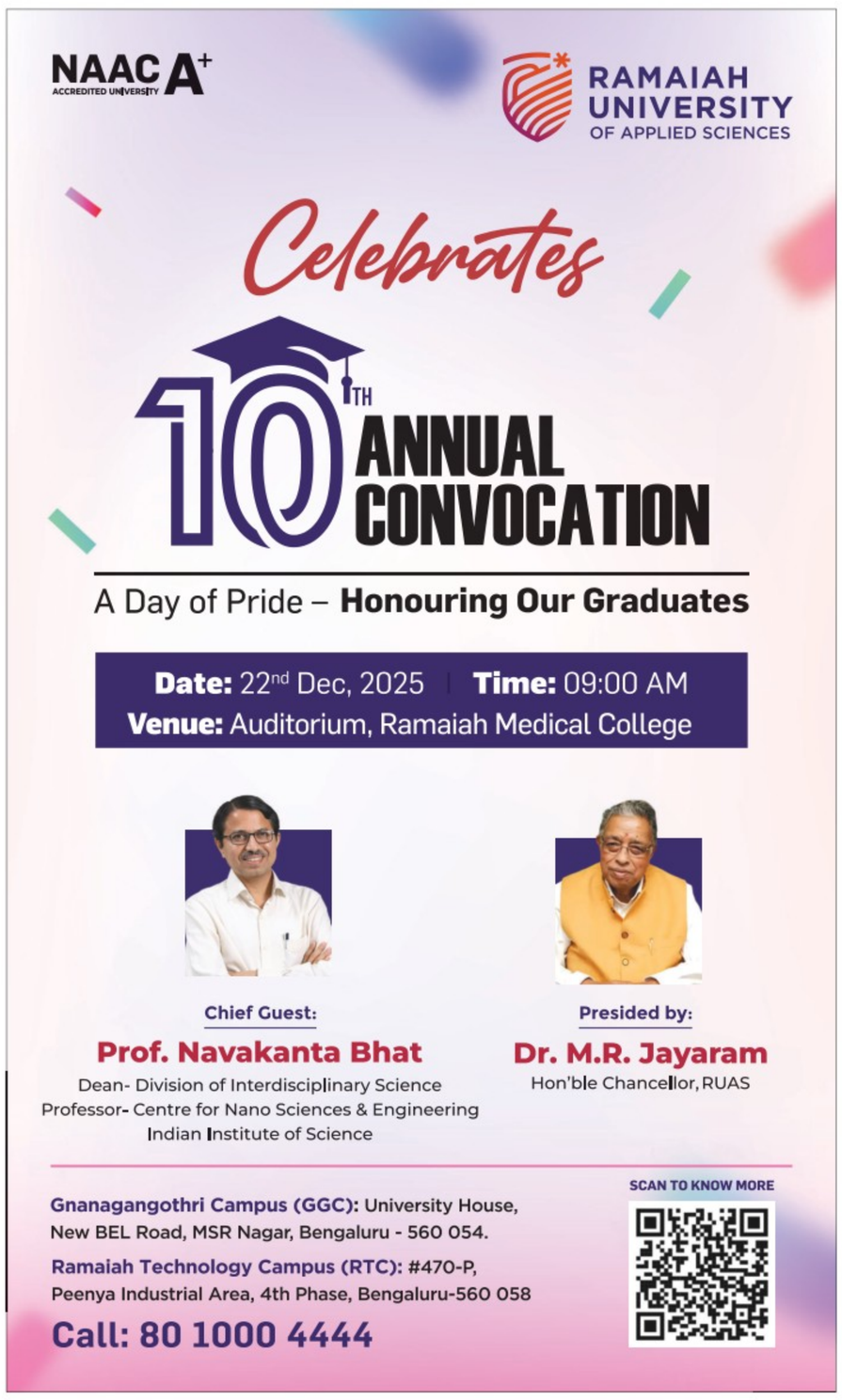
A government note said the MGNREGA "created works", while the VB-G RAM G would create "outcomes".

Works under the scheme would be undertaken across four focus areas – water security, core rural infrastructure, livelihood-related infrastructure, and extreme weather mitigation.

The Centre continued to be the principal funding partner and the 60:40 model was followed in nearly all Centrally sponsored schemes, the note said.

Under the MGNREGA, the Centre bore the wage bills and the States paid for 25% of the administrative cost, resulting in a cost-sharing ratio of 90:10.

'BULLDOZED DEMOLITION'
» PAGE 8



Forged in fire — how Sreejesh ignited his men to a maiden bronze

The legend, who is no stranger to pressure, ensured that India ticked every box at the World Cup; he was the inspiration behind the turnaround against Argentina in the playoff for the third spot after the setback against Germany in the semifinal had left him deeply disappointed

K. Keerthivasan

P.R. Sreejesh has shouldered the burden of a nation with his experience and expertise.

As a goalkeeper, he has stood between glory and heartbreak on many occasions.

Standing outside the goalmouth this time, the two-time Olympic bronze medallist found himself guarding something else – expectations.

The FIH junior men's hockey World Cup in Tamil Nadu (Chennai and Madurai), Sreejesh's first major international assignment as a head coach, was wrapped in nostalgia and hope.

Host India was well-prepared, well-drilled and well-equipped. The feeling was unmistakable: this was meant to be the tournament where the long drought ended.

The Indians hadn't stood on the podium since lifting the gold in 2016. In 2021 and 2023, they had come close before stumbling in the bronze-medal matches to France and Spain. The scars were fresh, but the hunger was real.

This time, though, the preparation was different. The squad that assembled for the World Cup had been given exposure and opportunity in equal measure. A four-nation tournament in Berlin against Germany, Australia and Spain had tested the side early. The Sultan of Johor Cup followed, where India pushed Australia all the way before settling for silver. These weren't just tours; the side was getting ready for the bigger battle.

By the time the team assembled in Chennai, belief was everywhere – on the turf, in the stands, and in the training sessions. Sreejesh, now 37, ran the camp like a man who knew time was precious.

Training days were intense and unrelenting. Penalty corners were rehearsed until muscle memory took over, defensive structures drilled to exhaustion, forwards urged to shoot without hesitation.

Goalkeepers were put through their drills while assistant coach Birendra Lakra quietly ensured that no one slipped through the cracks.

The early matches only added fuel to the narrative. India swept aside Chile (7-0), dismantled Oman (17-0) and brushed past Switzerland (5-0). In the quarterfinals, when Belgium refused to fold, India showed real nerves of steel, surviving regulation time and winning the shootout 4-3. It felt like the kind of escape only a confident team can make.

Then came Germany. Seven-time champion. Ruthless and unimpressed by atmosphere or occasion. If the league phase had allowed India to express itself, the semifinal was an examination, and Germany its toughest paper!

From the opening exchanges, the European powerhouse dictated terms. It pressed high and and forced India into uncomfortable spaces. Possession became precious, and suddenly the host was defending deeper than it wanted to.

Germany was clinical without being flashy. Its defence held shape, its transitions were sharp, and India's mistakes were punished without any mercy. By half-time, the scoreboard read 3-0, but the deeper damage was psychological. India was left to chase shadows.

The final score-- 5-1--told its own story. Germany didn't just win; they exposed the host in all aspects possible. When India finally found the net, it felt more like relief than resurgence.

Inside the dressing room, Sreejesh didn't hide his anger. This wasn't the fury of a man disappointed by defeat, but of one frustrated by avoidable errors: loose passes, lost possession, moments of hesitation.

Later, at training the next day, the message was stripped of emotion and boiled down to fundamentals: keep the ball, respect pressure and don't get overwhelmed by it, eliminate the basics errors.

The semifinal loss hurt because it revealed uncomfortable truths. No doubt, India's juniors are talented, ambitious, and well-drilled, but when the game tightens and the pressure intensifies, there is still ground to cover against tougher and bigger teams.

After all the build-up and expectation, had India lost its bronze medal match to Argentina, it would have raised a lot of uncomfortable questions about the team and the man at the helm, Sreejesh.

India, however, rose to the occasion in emphatic fashion. Trailing 0-2 for most of the match, the hosts produced a stirring final-quarter comeback, scoring all four goals in the last 15 minutes to stun the South American side 4-2. Three penalty-corner conversions turned the game on its head, two of them coming via brilliantly executed deflections that showcased both composure and belief.

It was a result forged under pressure, and one that resonated deeply with the head coach.

Leap of delight: The Indian players are gung-ho after sealing a podium finish in the junior men's World Cup with a remarkable comeback win against Argentina. R. RAGU

India secured its first bronze at the junior men's World Cup and completed the full set – silver in 1997, gold in 2001 and 2016

Painful relationship

For all his success as a player, Sreejesh's relationship with the World Cup has been a painful one. A double Olympic bronze medallist (Tokyo and Paris), he had never managed to win a medal at either junior or senior World Cups. He featured in the junior World Cup in 2005 and went on to represent the Indian senior team in four senior editions – 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2023 – but a podium finish always eluded him.

As he candidly admitted at a virtual press conference ahead of the junior World Cup, the regret lingered.

"In the four (senior) World Cups, we couldn't reach the semifinals. We were not able to touch the World Cup. It's always a regret in my career," he had said.

That made the bronze-medal triumph against Argentina all the more meaningful.

"How I came back! I'm going back with a medal. I'm happy," Sreejesh told mediapersons, the relief evident.

All about trust

According to the head coach, the turning point was the trust the players had in themselves and in the process.

"They trusted themselves, created opportunities and converted them. For the juniors, this is a great journey. I told these guys, 'If you can survive this pressure, this is the base. Because this is what is going to happen in the future'", he said.

Having been with the team for a year, and a bronze medal to show for his efforts, what is Sreejesh's next plan?

"It has just started," he replied. "It's been only 12 months for me. One win doesn't mean anything. I missed my final. I missed that semifinal. That a big drawback for me. If you want to win an Olympic gold medal, if you want to win a World Cup [gold] medal, you need to win that semifinal. That's really important," he said.

The head coach said he's learning from his experience and would continue to learn and share. "It's really important for me to learn how to prepare for semifinals. Being a player, I know how to face it. It's important for me how to control these 18-20 young players or 20 and prepare them. Therefore, I need my experience. I'm collecting it. I've just shared those lessons, what I learnt during the Olympic Games," he said.

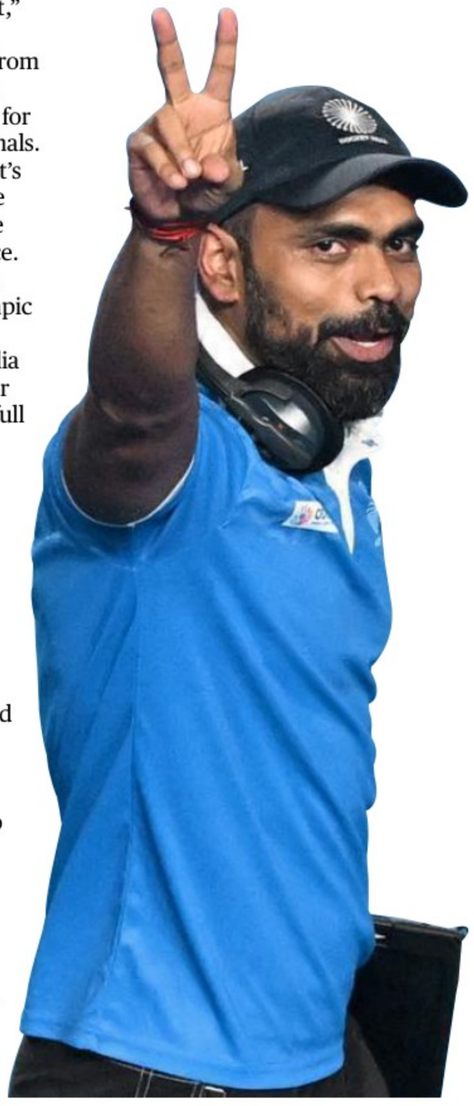
The players delivered, ensuring India its first-ever bronze medal at the junior men's World Cup and completed the full set – silver in 1997, gold in 2001 and 2016, and now bronze.

Watch out for...

Several names from this squad are likely to feature prominently in the years ahead: goalkeeper Prince Deep Singh, midfielders Rosan Kujur, Ankit Pal and Manmeet Singh, defenders Rohit and Anmol Ekka, and forward Arshdeep Singh. They have announced themselves, but they also should understand that this is only the beginning.

Sreejesh, no doubt, will continue to drill home the message to the boys.

> They trusted themselves, created opportunities and converted them. For the juniors, this was a great journey
>
> **SREEJESH**



THE GIST

The semifinal loss hurt because it revealed uncomfortable truths. India's juniors are talented, ambitious, and well-drilled, but when the game tightens and the pressure intensifies, there is still ground to cover against tougher and bigger teams

According to the head coach, the turning point was the trust the players had in themselves and in the process. The players delivered, ensuring India secure its first-ever bronze medal at the junior men's World Cup and completed the full set

Several names from this squad are likely to feature prominently in the years ahead, Sreejesh will continue to drill home the message to the boys

Android smartphones have the most AI-powered protections

A claim from a recent Counterpoint Research study:
"According to a recent evaluation of smartphone protection features,
Android smartphones scored highest for AI-powered protections."

Android

Vehicles continue to flout ban on highway

NHAI has enforced restrictions barring certain categories of vehicles from using the main carriageway of the Bengaluru-Mysuru highway

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

Despite a clear ban, two-wheelers and autorickshaws continue to enter the main carriageway of the Bengaluru-Mysuru access-controlled highway, raising serious safety concerns among regular users of the stretch.

Commuters say the persistent presence of prohibited vehicles not only interrupts the free flow of fast-moving traffic but also significantly increases the risk of accidents, given the high speed of the vehicles on the highway.

The movement of high-speed vehicles may pose a risk to the safety of certain classes of comparatively slow-moving vehicles like two-wheelers, three-wheelers, etc. FILE PHOTO

It has been nearly two years since the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) enforced restrictions barring certain categories of vehicles from using the main carriageway of the Bengaluru-Mysuru highway. The prohibition covers two-wheelers, autorickshaws, tractors, non-motorised vehicles, multi-axle hydraulic trailers and quadricycles. However, despite repeated advisories and enforcement drives in the initial phase, violations continue unabated, with two and three-wheelers frequently spotted on the stretch. Several motorists allege that the lack of consistent monitoring has allowed violators to enter the main carriageway of the highway. They point out that highway patrol vehicles and traffic police personnel, who were once stationed at entry and exit points, are now rarely seen enforcing the ban. This absence of visible policing, commuters say, has allowed prohibited vehicles to slip through unchecked, endangering themselves and others.

The prohibition covers two-wheelers, autorickshaws, tractors, non-motorised vehicles, multi-axle hydraulic trailers and quadricycles

Amruth Raj, who regularly travels between Bengaluru and Mysuru, said that he encounters banned vehicles on the highway almost every day. According to him, autorickshaws are particularly visible during early morning hours, especially up to the Sheshagirihalli toll plaza in Ramanagara district. "Many of these autos use the flyover near the NICE Road junction in the early hours. On a few occasions, I have even seen motorcycles riding in the wrong direction. Such behaviour turns this stretch into an accident-prone zone," he said.

Ban since August 2023

The ban was formally notified by the NHAI on August 1, 2023, citing safety concerns arising from mixed traffic conditions. The movement of high-speed vehicles may pose a risk to the safety of certain classes of comparatively slow-moving vehicles, for example, two-wheelers, three-wheelers and other slow-moving vehicles like non-motorised vehicles, agricultural tractors (with or without trailers), due to their vulnerability and associated speed differentials, and compromises road safety aspects.

Rajendra Prasad, a resident of Mandya who frequently commutes to Bengaluru, said that sudden entry of two-wheelers into high-speed traffic lanes can easily distract drivers of four-wheeled vehicles and lead to collisions.

"Earlier, the ban was strictly enforced, and security personnel were deployed at access points. Now, some people, driven by reckless thrill-seeking, continue to force their way onto the highway," he said.

Mr. Prasad also recalled a recent incident in which he saw a motorcyclist speeding on the highway after deliberately covering the vehicle's number plate to avoid identification. "Even a minor error in such situations could cost lives," he added. Other commuters have questioned how two-wheelers manage to bypass toll plazas without being stopped. Ashok M., another frequent user of the highway, said that many bikers who enter the main carriageway illegally also flout lane discipline, riding in the middle and right lanes meant for faster vehicles. "If this continues without intervention from the police or NHAI, it could result in serious accidents on the corridor," he warned.

Monitoring systems

Responding to these concerns, NHAI officials said that advanced monitoring systems have been put in place to curb violations. According to officials, artificial intelligence-powered traffic enforcement cameras have been installed at key locations along both the Bengaluru-Nidaghatta and Nidaghatta-Mysuru sections.

"Dedicated cameras positioned at regular intervals are intended to enhance surveillance and detect a range of violations, including the entry of slow-moving and prohibited vehicles onto the main carriageway," an official said.

Retired Supreme Court judge Abhay Manohar Sapre reviewing the road safety measures on National Highway 275 on Saturday. Mandya Deputy Commissioner Kumar is seen. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Road Safety Advisory Committee chairman inspects NH 275

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Abhay Manohar Sapre, retired Supreme Court judge and chairperson of the apex court's Road Safety Advisory Committee, inspected the road safety measures on the National Highway 275, which also connects Bengaluru and Mysuru.

Mr. Sapre, who carried out the inspection along with senior officials including Mandya Deputy Commissioner Kumar on Saturday, also held discussions with the officials on the additional measures required to prevent serious road accidents on NH 275.

During the review, the retired judge appreciated that road accidents on the national highway had reduced in 2025 compared to previous years after the installation of AI-enabled cameras.

However, he instructed the officials to take necessary steps to carry out regular technical updates of the AI cameras and other devices to ensure their smooth functioning.

Mr. Sapre also recommended the installation of digital speed control systems to regulate overspeeding of vehicles.

He suggested installing adequate signboards that are prominently and clearly visible at accident-prone locations, in addition to undertaking measures to ensure strict adherence to lane discipline and prevention of over-speeding.

Hebbal flyover's new loop opens for trial run

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Hebbal flyover is expected to see smoother traffic flow as the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) opened a new loop for vehicular movement on a trial basis from Saturday night.

This comes after completion of construction work to ease congestion at one of the city's busiest junctions.

The project was initially expected to be completed by November 30, as directed by Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D.K. Shivakumar. Though rains delayed the construction work, the BDA officials said the work was finished well before the extended January 1 deadline. With this addition, the Hebbal Flyover now has dedicated routes for multiple traffic streams. Earlier, a separate loop for vehicles coming from the Nagawara side towards Mehkri Circle was inaugurated a few months ago by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

A view of the new loop of the Hebbal flyover, which is an additional loop designed for carrying traffic from the Outer Ring Road with an aim to ease congestion for commuters travelling from Yelahanka, Jakkur, and Sahakara Nagar towards Mehkri Circle. SUDHAKARA JAIN

The move comes after completion of construction work to ease congestion at one of the city's busiest junctions

The new loop is expected to significantly help commuters from northern areas such as Yelahanka, Jakkur, and Sahakara Nagar travel directly towards Mehkri Circle, while passengers returning from the airport are also likely to have a smoother journey.

While concerns were previously raised about possible bottlenecks near Mehkri Circle, especially towards Jayamahal Road, the officials, however, said the new loop was expected to reduce overall travel time.

The traffic police used to operate a manual signal on the flyover alternating between traffic from the Airport Expressway and traffic from Jakkur and Sahakar Nagar. Now with the additional loop separating traffic from these two sources into seperate lanes, this signal has been removed. This itself will cut down travel time on the flyover.

Pop culture

Cosplayers dressed as Spider-Man and other characters from comic books, anime, films, and video games during the Bengaluru Comic Con 2025 fest in Bengaluru on Sunday. AFP

Two, including software engineer, killed in separate road accidents

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Two men died in separate road accidents in the city since Saturday night.

In the first incident, a 31-year-old software engineer was killed after losing control of his speeding motorcycle and skidding on Hulimavu Lake Road in the early hours of Sunday. The accident occurred near the Kodandarama Swami Temple.

The deceased has been identified as Muniswami, a resident of Kammanahalli and a native of Dharmapuri district in Tamil Nadu.

Declared dead

According to the police, around 1.30 a.m., Muniswami was returning home after meeting a friend when he lost control of his bike, fell off, and suffered severe injuries. Passers-by rushed him to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead. The Hulimavu Traffic Police have registered a case. In another incident, a 32-year-old man died after a two-wheeler he was riding hit a road hump and he was thrown off the vehicle. The accident took place near the Sulikunte bus stop on Sarjapura Main Road on Saturday night.

The deceased has been identified as Gopi Mohan, an audiologist from Vellore district in Tamil Nadu. Police said Mohan had come to Bengaluru for work and had been staying at Thayyakannahalli for the past two days. He had rented a two-wheeler for commuting.

Case registered

Around 9.30 p.m., while returning after finishing work, Mohan was reportedly riding at a high speed and failed to notice a road hump near the Sulikunte bus stop, causing him to lose balance and fall. He was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he later succumbed to his injuries. The Whitefield Traffic Police have registered a case.

Lorry driver held after he rams multiple vehicles

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In a series of accidents, a lorry driver allegedly under the influence of alcohol rammed more than six vehicles at different locations on Chandapura Road in Anekal taluk on Sunday afternoon, leaving two people seriously injured.

The police said the Uttar Pradesh-registered lorry was driven by Prem, 35, who was heading towards Chandapura from a warehouse in Attibele. The driver allegedly first rammed two vehicles in Anekal, seriously injuring two persons, before fleeing the spot.

He then went on to hit three more vehicles in the Surya City area and later rammed another vehicle in the Attibele police station limits, the police said.

Tries to evade police

The driver allegedly evaded the police and was caught later. A case has been registered.

Participants taking part in the Fit India Walkathon in Bengaluru on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

HAL organises walkathon

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), which will be observing its 86th Foundation Day later this week, kicked off the celebrations with a Fit India Walkathon here on Sunday.

HAL chairman and M.D. D.K. Sunil flagged off the walkathon which saw participation of around 1,000 employees from Bengaluru-based divisions.

Dr. Sunil also flagged off a mountaineering expedition by Aritra Roy, an accomplished mountaineer and Everest Summiteer, to South America. Mr. Aritra will climb Mount Aconcagua, the highest peak in South America, as part of his Seven-Summit Challenge. "The HAL has always stood for courage, excellence, and the spirit of pushing boundaries. As we celebrate our 86th Foundation Day, HAL is proud to encourage such extraordinary pursuits that demonstrate resilience, leadership, and the ability to overcome challenges. We wish him a successful climb," said Dr. Sunil.

The HAL Day is celebrated annually on December 23, and this year, a special event will be organised on the New HAL Management Academy Campus, along with celebrations across all HAL divisions and offices.

Researchers uncover missing link in cellular cleanup that can help treat Alzheimer, Parkinson, and cancer

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Researchers from Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) have uncovered a surprising player in autophagy or the 'self-eating' process that removes damaged parts, fights infections, and keeps long-lived cells like neurons in good working order.

This newly uncovered missing link in cellular cleanup can help develop therapeutic strategies for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and cancer.

According to the Department of Science and Technology, the identification of key players in the early steps of autophagosome biogenesis, a key stage in the autophagy pathway, can lay the foundations for modulating the pathway for finding interventions that can restore the pathway in diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and cancer. "Just as our homes need regular cleaning, our cells also clear out damaged and unwanted materials through a process called autophagy," it said.

When a cell fails to clear waste, its health suffers, especially in long-lived neurons, the department said.

"The autophagy pathway, which removes damaged material and defends against infections, is disrupted in diseases like Alzheimer's and Huntington's. Autophagy also has dual roles in cancer, preventing it early on but supporting tumor growth later. Autophagy acts as tumor suppressor by maintaining genome integrity and cellular homeostasis by clearing cellular junk such as protein aggregates and damaged mitochondria. But it is also a double-edged sword as certain types of cancer cells hijack autophagy for their own survival and propagation. Understanding its regulation is crucial for the development of effective therapies," it added. The JNCASR researchers have found that a group of proteins called the exocyst complex also plays a key role in autophagy.

"This complex comprises a team of eight proteins; interestingly, seven of the eight proteins are required to help the cell grow the trash bag so that it can completely wrap up the waste. When this complex is missing, the cell's bag-making factory stops working properly and even starts producing faulty, non-functional factories," the department said.

The researchers led by Ravi Manjithaya used simple yeast cells to elucidate the formation of autophagosomes (cellular 'trash bags'), thereby providing insights into how this vital process operates in higher organisms.

They elucidated the mechanism by which a protein complex exocyst, previously recognised for its role in secretion, also contributes to the autophagy pathway.

Southern Ocean carbon 'anomaly' reveals what models can still miss

For nearly two decades, computer models said stronger westerly winds and more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere would pump more carbon-rich deep water up towards the Southern Ocean's surface, which would release carbon dioxide into the air; yet new research has found the exact opposite has happened

Ashmita Gupta

The Southern Ocean plays an outsized role in regulating the earth's climate with its moody currents and its tremendous ability to absorb heat and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

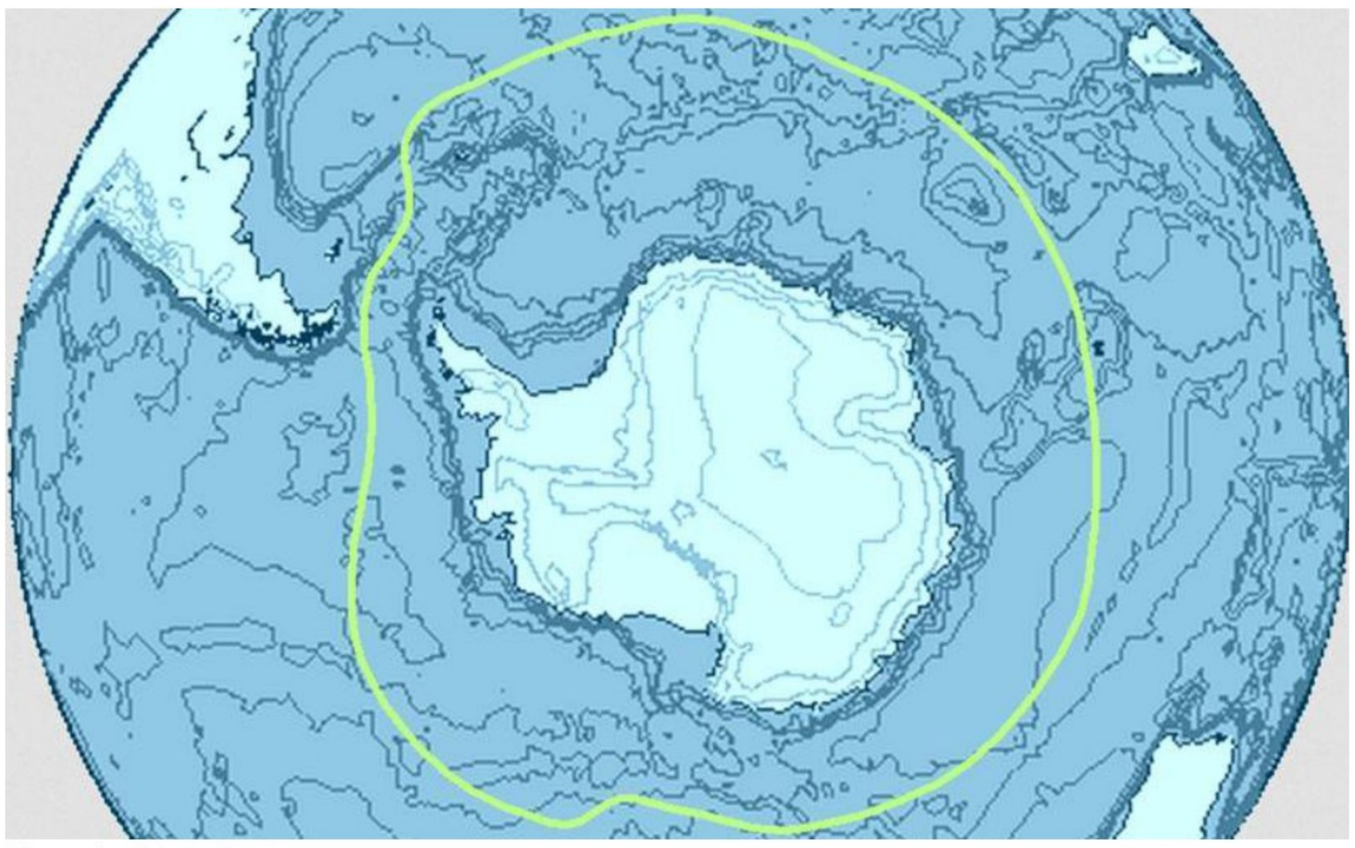
It covers roughly 25-30% of the global ocean area and absorbs about 40% of all the human-emitted carbon dioxide the oceans absorb.

This ability comes in large part from its cold and relatively fresh surface layers, which sit like a lid on top of the warmer, saltier, carbon-rich reservoirs. This arrangement allows the ocean to trap a lot more carbon dioxide than it emits. Even a small shift in this layering can, however, change whether the ocean continues to act as a buffer or if it becomes a new source of atmospheric carbon dioxide.

For nearly two decades, scientists have used computer models to understand the ocean's role in climate change, and the models have been saying the Southern Ocean could become less of a sink as the world warms. Specifically, the models said stronger westerly winds and more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere would pump more carbon-rich deep water up towards the surface, which would release carbon dioxide into the air.

Yet new data has found the exact opposite has happened.

Since the early 2000s, scientists have found the Southern Ocean to be soaking up more carbon, not less. A new long-term analysis of ocean chemistry by researchers – from the Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research and the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, both in Germany – has offered a new explanation for this unexpected resilience. While climate models did get important parts of the physics right, the researchers said the models missed a surface process that temporarily masked the weakening they predicted. The team's findings were published in *Nature Climate Change* in October.



A demarcation of the Southern Ocean. APCBG (CC BY-SA)

The carbon sink

The models' reasoning was physically sound. As the concentration of greenhouse gases rose, westerly winds in the southern hemisphere were to strengthen and shift poleward. This shift would mean stronger upwelling in the Southern Ocean, i.e. more deep, carbon-dioxide-laden waters rising towards the surface.

"The key assumption in earlier climate models is an intensification of the meridional overturning circulation of the Southern Ocean," Léa Olivier, the new study's coauthor and an oceanographer at the aforementioned institutions, said. "That would lead to more waters from the deep of the ocean ... being in contact with the atmosphere, and therefore weakening the Southern Ocean carbon sink."

So models predicted that as the winds got stronger, the Southern Ocean would start emitting more carbon.

Using decades of measurements across the Southern Ocean, the new analysis has reported that the deep waters are indeed rising. The circumpolar deep waters, which are naturally rich in dissolved inorganic carbon and warmer than the layers above, have moved up by around 40 metres since the 1990s.

This in turn has increased carbon dioxide pressure in the subsurface by about 10 microatmospheres, a shift consistent with model projections.

What the models missed

Even then the ocean wasn't emitting more carbon dioxide, and the team found why in a thin layer of freshwater at the surface.

Over the last few decades, the Southern Ocean has been becoming fresher (less salty) thanks to more rainfall and more meltwater from Antarctica's glaciers. Fresher water is lighter. When it accumulates at the surface, it strengthens stratification, i.e. the amount of layering that separates the cooler and more buoyant surface from the warmer and saltier waters below.This stratification prevented the carbon-rich water from the deep from being exposed to the atmosphere. Instead it seems to be trapped 100-200 m below the surface.

According to Dr. Olivier, this is what models struggled to capture: "We have two competing mechanisms: the upwelling that brings the deep water up and the stratification that blocks the vertical exchanges."

> The key assumption in earlier models is an intensification of the meridional overturning circulation of the Southern Ocean
>
> **LÉA OLIVIER**
> HELMHOLTZ CENTRE FOR POLAR AND MARINE RESEARCH AND THE LUDWIG MAXIMILIAN UNIVERSITY

Indeed capturing the presence of this layer is quite challenging. Stratification is governed by many processes that are happening at wildly different scales. Dr. Olivier said this is mainly due to the complex physics of eddies and ice-shelf cavities. Eddies are only a few kilometres wide while ice cavities are much larger.

"The lack of data also plays a role," she added.

Fleeting reprieve

The new study emphasised that the current situation may not last. Roughly in the first half of the 2010s, the stratified layer began to grow thinner. Recent observations have shown surface salinity rising again in parts of the Southern Ocean, suggesting the lid may be fading.

"We see a strong stratification, but it is getting more shallow," Dr. Olivier explained. "Strong winds could more easily reach below the stratified layer and into the deep waters that are warm, saline and rich in carbon dioxide. Once these waters mix, it will be harder to re-stratify the upper layer."

In other words, the predicted weakening of the carbon sink could re-emerge, and perhaps sooner than (now) expected. The deep carbon dioxide reservoir is already closer to the surface than it used to be. So if the stratification erodes further, the carbon that models expected to see at the surface decades ago could suddenly appear.

But rather than discredit models, the researchers said their findings reinforce how essential they are. Their projections helped direct policy attention to the processes that scientists needed to observe, and which helped explain why the Southern Ocean behaved unexpectedly.

The lesson is simple: models reveal vulnerabilities; observations reveal exceptions. And the earth's climate system lies somewhere in between.

To know what comes next, scientists also need continuous, year-round observations . Whether it absorbs or releases carbon in the coming decades could profoundly alter the planet's future and tell us just how well our models can keep up with the evolution of a deceptively small ocean.

(Ashmita Gupta is a science writer. ashmitagupta1321@gmail.com)

THE GIST

- The Southern Ocean absorbs 40% of all carbon dioxide emissions. This derives from its cold and relatively fresh surface layers, which sit like a lid on top of the warmer, saltier, carbon-rich reservoirs. This allows the ocean to trap a lot more carbon dioxide than it emits
- The Southern Ocean has been becoming fresher, this water is lighter and accumulates at the surface; it strengthens stratification. This prevented carbon-rich water from being exposed to the atmosphere. Instead, it seems to be trapped 100-200 m below the surface
- The study emphasised that the situation may not last. The stratified layer is growing thinner. Observations have shown surface salinity rising again, suggesting the lid may be fading. The predicted weakening of the carbon sink could re-emerge, and sooner than expected

BIG SHOT

This photo released by Polar Bears International on December 17 shows a wild female polar bear and her two cubs, one of whom she adopted, in Manitoba, Canada. Researchers have said this is a rare case of polar bear adoption. A scientist with the government said it's the 13th instance in the population over 45 years. AFP

WHAT IS IT?

Superkilonova: double whammy

This artist's concept shows a hypothetical superkilonova, from a supernova (left), to two neutron stars circling each other (centre), to finally merging in a kilonova (right). CALTECH/K. MILLER AND R. HURT (IPAC)

Vasudevan Mukunth

A superkilonova is a rare kind of cosmic explosion.

When two neutron stars smash into each other, the material tossed into space includes heavy, radioactive elements like gold, platinum, and neodymium. Over time the elements decay and the emissions in the optical and infrared parts of the spectrum are called a kilonova.

A superkilonova has an additional energy source. In one version, after the merger, some ejected matter may fall back towards the merged object and become hotter. This heat can heat up the surrounding ejecta, making it brighter and bluer than a kilonova alone, and perhaps for longer too.

In a study published on December 15, an international research team -- including from IIT-Bombay and the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru -- reported a possible second version. They zeroed in on a source of bright light 1.3 billion lightyears away. The team found its brightness and light 'fingerprint' could be explained by a superkilonova where a supernova blows up a massive star into two neutron stars, which then merge to produce a kilonova.

"At first, for about three days, the eruption looked" like a kilonova, director of Caltech's Palomar Observatory Mansi Kasliwal, said in a statement. "Everybody was intensely trying to observe and analyse it, but then it started to look more like a supernova, and some astronomers lost interest. Not us." The team has said astronomers will need more data about such events before being sure, "but the event nevertheless is eye opening".

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Selvam Jesiah

ETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Growing together

Introducing Cooperative Learning across all educational levels helps students develop cognitive, interpersonal, self-leadership, and digital skills required for a volatile world.

As technology transforms the world today, students need to learn new skills and to adapt to the emerging fields and changing dimensions of the workplace.

A report from McKinsey revealed that the workforce of the future should be instilled with 56 Distinct Elements of Talent (DELTAs), otherwise called foundational skills, that help young people succeed during their career. DELTAs are a combination of skills and attitudes that are classified under four categories: cognitive, interpersonal, self-leadership and digital.

Students can easily learn interpersonal and self-leadership skills if cooperative learning is imparted as a methodology in the regular teaching and learning process.

What is CL?

Cooperative learning (CL) is widely recognised as a pedagogical practice that develops socialisation and learning through participation among learners. This practice can be adopted across various levels of education and subjects.

CL is a student-centred instructional strategy where a small team of students is responsible for an individual's and the group's learning. Each team has set goals and roles are assigned on the basis of skills and capabilities. Each individual is accountable for his/her progress and the team's outcomes. This involves students working together to achieve common goals that they would not or think cannot be completed by themselves.

Though the teacher facilitates and structures the majority of the activities, the learning responsibility is totally in the hands of each member and the team.

How it works

Institutions should introduce CL at the beginning of the academic year and establish teams with not more than five members that will work for a specific period under the teachers' intervention and monitoring. The teachers should be responsible for creating a positive environment within the team.

While the degree of intervention and monitoring will differ depending on the level of education, those at higher levels should require little or minimum intervention.

Teachers can help organise teams rather than allow students to form their own, as a team should be a heterogeneous group with different skill sets, abilities, gender, ethnicity and regional diversity.

While learners may differ in their personality and dynamics, those who are unwilling to work in a team and those who offload their work and responsibility should be identified to ensure they contribute equally.

From the beginning, the teacher and each team member must ensure that the team shows interdependence, facilitates one another's learning, is held mutually responsible for process and outcomes, and exhibits acceptable interpersonal skills and process team dynamics.

Benefits

Research has shown that CL has various benefits. It promotes positive interdependence with learners knowing how to promote each other's success. Most of the future skills and attitudes defined by McKinsey as DELTAs, particularly interpersonal and self-leadership skills, can be learnt irrespective of the individual's level of education. These include empathy, humility, inspiring trust, sociability, developing vision, organisational awareness, role modelling, win-win negotiation, coaching and collaboration, inclusiveness, motivating different personalities, resolving conflict, breaking conventional wisdom, courage and risk-taking, achievement orientation, coping with uncertainty, grit and persistence, ownership and decisiveness, self-development, integrity, self-confidence, self-control and regulation, self-motivation, understanding own emotions and triggers, and understanding own strengths.

Although Indian students have superior technical skills, many lack interpersonal, self-leadership and emotional intelligence needed to survive in a very volatile business and economic environment. This is where CL can be useful if implemented properly.

The writer is Principal, Faculty of Management Sciences, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, (Deemed to be University), Chennai.

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of new Jewish settlements to be set up in West Bank

19 Israel's Cabinet approved a proposal for 19 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, the far-right finance minister said. The approval increases the number of settlements in the West Bank by nearly 50% during the current government's tenure, from 141 in 2022 to 210. PTI

People displaced in Cambodia by Thai border clashes

5 In lakh. More than half a million people in Cambodia have been displaced from their homes by two weeks of border clashes with neighbouring Thailand, Phnom Penh's interior ministry said. The renewed fighting between the neighbours has killed at least 22 people in Thailand and 19 in Cambodia. AFP

Acres of illicit poppy cultivation destroyed in Manipur

600 Security forces destroyed over 600 acres of illicit poppy cultivation in the hill districts of Ukhrul and Kangpokpi in Manipur, the police said. Around 559 acres of poppy plantations were destroyed from December 16-20 in different locations of Ukhrul. PTI

The increase in India's exports to the U.S. in November

22.61 In per cent. Supply-chain realignments and inventory restocking ahead of the U.S. holiday season helped India's exports rebound in November, GTRI said. India's merchandise exports to the U.S. rose 22.61% to $6.98 billion in November. PTI

Monitoring stations in Delhi that reported 'severe' air quality

16 The air quality in the national capital was recorded in the 'very poor' category on Sunday morning, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). 16 out of the 40 monitoring stations in the city reported air quality in the 'severe' category. PTI

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What is the Aland voter fraud case?

When did the Election Commission file a complaint with respect to irregularities in Form 7s from the Aland assembly constituency in Kalaburagi? Why did the investigation hit a roadblock? What loopholes within the National Voters' Service Portal did the alleged fraudsters exploit?

EXPLAINER

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj

The story so far:

The case of voter fraud in the Aland assembly constituency in Kalaburagi district in north Karnataka has emerged as one of the most well documented voter fraud cases, amidst a series of press conferences by Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi alleging widespread "vote chori" (vote fraud) in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Haryana.

Why is this case different?

Firstly, it was the Returning Officer (RO) of Aland constituency who lodged a complaint with the police in February 2023, alleging voter fraud, based on which an FIR was registered. The Election Commission (EC) itself alleged a malafide attempt to delete the names of 5,994 genuine voters from the electoral rolls, by providing false information.

Secondly, the investigation into the FIR by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed by the Government of Karnataka, has led to a chargesheet being filed against former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Subhash Guttedar from Aland and his son Harshananda Guttedar for allegedly hiring a private firm to target voters they suspected will vote for his rival and delete their names through forged Form 7s.

This is the first case where a clear link has been drawn to the BJP and "vote chori" allegations made by the Congress.

How was the fraud uncovered?

In 2018, veteran socialist and now Congress MLA from Aland, B. R. Patil, lost the seat to BJP's Subhash Guttedar by a narrow margin of 697 votes. Mr. Patil was again the candidate for the seat from the Congress in the 2023 assembly polls, which he eventually won by 10,348 votes.

In February 2023, a Booth Level Officer (BLO) got a Form 7 application, which, to her surprise, sought deletion of the name of her brother from the voter list saying he had "shifted out." The application was made in the name of a woman from the same village. When they checked, the woman denied making any application. Subsequently, a review of Form 7s from that village found that 40 such forms were forged.

Any voter of a specific assembly constituency can fill out a Form 7 seeking the deletion of names of other voters from the same constituency, after their death or if they have shifted out. These applications are sent to BLOs for an on-ground verification, after which they are processed. However, in most cases, BLOs blindly accept these applications without verification. In this case, the BLO's brother, whose name was sought to be removed, tipped off Mr. Patil about the forged Form 7s in his village, saying all people whose names were sought to be deleted were Congress voters. This set off alarm bells, pushing Mr. Patil to complain to the EC and demand a thorough verification of all Form 7s.

How did the investigation proceed?

Mamata Kumari, Assistant Commissioner and the then RO of the Aland assembly constituency, tasked with the audit of Form 7s, in her eventual complaint to the Aland Police, said that there were 6,018 Form 7s in Aland assembly constituency between December 2022 and February 2023, of which only 24 were genuine while 5,994 forms were forged. She said that there was a conspiracy to disenfranchise genuine voters and sought a probe; an FIR was registered against unidentified individuals. The probe into the FIR was eventually transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Karnataka.

Inner workings: Police guard the residence of Subhash Guttedar, former MLA of Aland, in Kalaburagi during a raid by SIT officials on October 17. ARUN KULKARNI

The EC shared data for over 5,700 forged Form 7s to the police, including the mobile numbers used to create login IDs and passwords on EC portals such as the National Voters' Service Portal (NVSP) through which all forged Form 7s were submitted. It also provided IP logs. The CID got the Public Internet Protocol Detail Record (IPDR) from Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), which were in the IPV4 format and each IP address had over 200 users attached to it in the form of dynamic IP addresses. This meant probing over 8 lakh devices. To narrow down the search, the CID sought destination IPs and ports of the sessions through which these forged Form 7s were made. Despite at least 12 letters written by the CID to the EC seeking this data, the Commission did not respond, as reported by *The Hindu* on September 7.

Then, on September 18, 2025, Mr. Gandhi held a press conference in Delhi questioning the EC over the Aland vote fraud. Even though the Commission initially claimed that there was no wrongful deletion of voters in Aland, a day later, the Chief Electoral Officer of Karnataka conceded that there were "unsuccessful attempts" to delete voters and that the EC itself had lodged a complaint.

Following this, the government in Karnataka formed an SIT led by B. K. Singh, Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Karnataka.

How was the case eventually solved?

As the EC did not share the destination ports and IPs, the SIT found another route. Sources said the SIT scrutinised some of the 24 genuine Form 7s made in Aland, identified their IP addresses and reverse engineered them to narrow down the search for the devices used to make the forged Form 7s.

The SIT found that many of the 5,994 forged Form 7s could be traced to a mobile internet connection of one Mohammed Ashfaq, based out of Kalaburagi. Ashfaq reportedly confessed to having submitted forged Form 7s, but said he was only working for his relatives, Akram Pasha and Aslam Pasha, who ran a "call-centre-like" firm in Kalaburagi which had a contract to make Form 7s. They were allegedly paid ₹80 for every forged Form 7. The Pasha brothers were then detained, questioned and their premises raided. The SIT claimed that they recovered multiple digital devices through which the forged Form 7s were made, which now forms the key evidence in the chargesheet the SIT has filed recently.

The trio reportedly said that they had a contract to do so from the then incumbent BJP MLA Subhash Guttedar, a four-time MLA from Aland, and his son Harshananda Guttedar, a three-time Kalaburagi Zilla Panchayat member. The SIT further raided their residences and that of their Chartered Accountant in Kalaburagi, and recovered digital devices and evidence of a money trail between the Guttedars and Akram Pasha. It is alleged that the Guttedars marked out voters they thought would vote for their rival and handed it over to Akram Pasha.

Additionally, the Guttedars were caught destroying evidence, including several bundles of voter lists stored at their Aland residence. They have been charged for destruction of evidence as well.

What was revealed in the course of the investigation?

In 2023, the EC had shared with the investigators as many as 64 mobile numbers using which accounts were created on the NVSP. It was through these accounts that the 5,994 forged forms were submitted. When a person creates an account on NVSP, s/he will have to key in his mobile number, which will be the Login ID, and get an OTP. This will lead the portal to verify the user, following which a password needs to be set.

The probe started with these phone numbers. The investigators found that the owners of these mobile numbers were from over 15 States of the country. None of them had either created these accounts or given out OTPs they received on their phones.

This puzzle was resolved when the Pasha brothers pointed the investigators towards 'otpbazar.online', a website which, for a price, sold credentials to carry out transactions online in such a way that it could not be traced back. Once one registers on the website paying a fee, it will give you a random mobile number, which could be used for any transaction online. Within minutes, the website will give you the OTP sent to that mobile number, sources said, using which the brothers reportedly opened the accounts on the NVSP.

Through the money trail between the Pasha brothers and the website, the SIT also tracked down Bapi Adya, the man running the website from the Nadia district in West Bengal, and arrested him. However, how he was able to give OTPs to random mobile numbers the website selected still remains a mystery. His website is just an Indian franchise of a U.S.-based website called 'sms-activate.io'. The SIT has not been able to reach the servers of this website. However, they are taking steps to take down 'otpbazar.online', given its larger repercussions enabling cyber crime.

Is the voter portal compromised?

The chargesheet in the case lists six loopholes of the NVSP that the accused misused to make forged Form 7s, some of which have been fixed now.

Any mobile number and the OTP sent to it could be used to create an account and set the password.

Subsequent logins needed only the password and no OTP. Any number of applications could be made from these accounts. No alert was sent to either the person in whose name the application was being made or whose name was sought to be deleted from or added to the list. Moreover, there was no fixed session time on the portal.

Days after the press conference by Mr. Gandhi in September, 2025, the EC introduced a new e-sign feature, which mandates that those who make any applications online for addition, deletion or correction verify their identity through their Aadhar-linked mobile number.

While this will enhance security, there is no clarity whether all six loopholes flagged by the SIT have been fixed.

THE GIST

- It was the Returning Officer (RO) of Aland constituency who lodged a complaint with the police in February 2023, alleging voter fraud, based on which an FIR was registered.
- In 2023, the EC had shared with the investigators as many as 64 mobile numbers using which accounts were created on the NVSP. It was through these accounts that the 5,994 forged forms were submitted.
- The chargesheet in the case lists six loopholes of the NVSP that the accused misused to make forged Form 7s, some of which have been fixed now.

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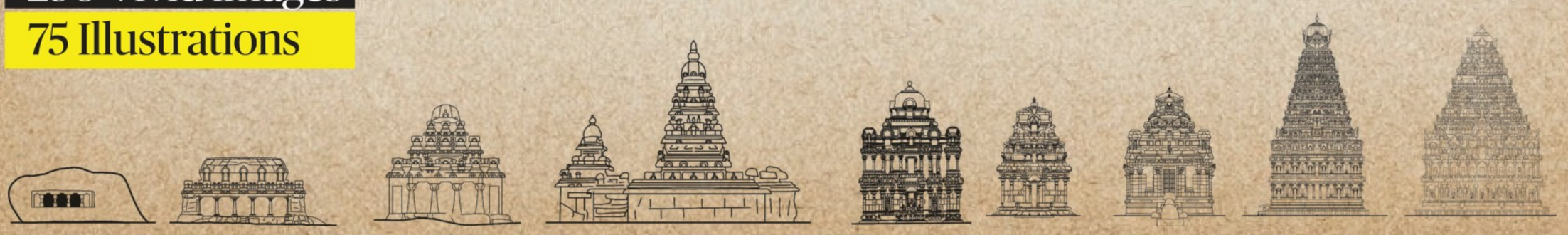

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2025 saw Bengaluru's governance restructured, but no elections yet

Like every year over the past five years, civic polls seem imminent anytime now. But given the past experience, no one is ready to believe that elections will indeed be held till it really happens

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

The year gone by will be remembered as a landmark year when Bengaluru's governance was finally restructured. While the civic administration transitioned into a five corporation setup, a new Chief Minister-led body called the Greater Bengaluru Authority, at the pan-city level brought all the parastatals of the city on one platform for the first time ever.

However, in September, 2025, when the five new corporations came into being, the city also marked five years without an elected council, a full term of a council. Like every year, over the past five years, civic polls seem imminent anytime now. But given the past experience, no one is ready to believe that elections will indeed be held till it really happens.

The GBA notified the delimited wards- 369 in five corporations, up from 198 earlier for the same area- on November 19. It is yet to notify the roster of ward reservation. K. MURALI KUMAR

Journey from BBMP to GBA

- **July 2023:** Brand Bengaluru Committee constituted under the leadership of retired IAS officer B.S. Patil
- **July 23, 2024:** The draft of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act was tabled in the Assembly, and then passed on to a House committee
- **March 10, 2025:** Legislative Assembly passed the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, with a few amendments
- **April 24, 2025:** The Act was published through gazette notification after Governor's approval
- **May 15, 2025:** The Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, comes into force
- **August 26, 2025:** Greater Bengaluru Authority constituted
- **September 02, 2025:** Government notifies formation of five corporations
- **November 19, 2025:** Government publishes final ward delimitation notification with 369 wards

Ward Count

Central	South	North	West	East	Total: 369
63	72	72	112	50	

2025, THE YEAR THAT WAS

Sources say that recently it was informally discussed in the State Cabinet meeting that civic polls should be held in April-May, 2026

Two models

Back in 2007, the H. D. Kumaraswamy led BJP-JDS government expanded the civic limits of Bengaluru from the erstwhile 225 sq. km to 709 sq. km, forming the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), adding several City and Town Municipal Corporations apart from 110 villages.

However, this experiment soon soured. The Siddaramaiah-led previous regime of the Congress argued that the BBMP was unmanageable and proposed a multiple corporations set-up in 2014. For a decade now, the Congress and BJP-JDS have stuck to their models and no restructuring happened for over a decade because of this.

It was in 2015 that the BBMP Restructuring Committee recommended a multiple corporations set-up. However, the Governor sent a Bill that sought to implement this for Presidential assent. With the courts directing the government to hold civic polls immediately, it was put on the backburner.

The BJP government that came to power in 2019 championed the BBMP they formed while in power and brought in a new dedicated law for the city governance- BBMP Act, 2020, which the Congress called a 'missed opportunity to fix Bengaluru's governance deficit'.

GBA and five corporations

Once they returned to power in 2023, the Congress reconstituted the BBMP Restructuring Committee as Brand Bengaluru Committee, which submitted a draft of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill in 2024. However, the government drafted its own bill, taking only the basic structure from the draft submitted by the Committee and tabled it in the Assembly in July, 2024. It eventually was referred to a house committee and was passed by both houses in March, 2025. It was notified in April and the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024 came into force from May 15, 2025.

With this, the Congress finally has had its way in over a decade-long back and forth over the city's governance fix. However, multiple petitions challenging this law are pending before the High Court.

The State government notified the boundaries of five corporations in September, 2025. With Commissioners and other officials appointed, the corporations have taken off already. Is there a quality difference in governance in the city with the multiple corporations set-up is the foremost question. The jury is still out there.

Meanwhile, all the parastatals of the city from the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) to Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) to the city police are working in tandem for the first time ever, giving up the earlier menace of agencies working in silos and at cross purposes. This is expected to have a positive impact on the city's governance.

Will elections be held in 2026?

With the multiple corporations also coming into existence, there seems to be no defence for not holding civic polls in the city. The State government has committed before the Supreme Court that they would notify delimitation of wards by November 15, 2025 and the roster of ward reservation by December 15, 2025. The GBA notified the delimited wards- 369 in five corporations, up from 198 earlier for the same area- on November 19. It is yet to notify the roster of ward reservation.

Objection

Meanwhile, OBC groups have objected to the roster of ward reservation being done as per the report of the Justice K. Bhaktavatsala Commission which recommended continuing with 32% reservation for OBCs. The groups have argued the Supreme Court mandated triple test, especially identifying politically backward communities, hasn't happened in the State and have demanded that a new Commission should be set up. If either the government forms a new Commission or if the reservation roster based on the recommendations of the Bhaktavatsala Commission is challenged, it is likely to delay civic polls in the State even further.

Meanwhile, recently it was informally discussed in the State Cabinet meeting that civic polls should be held in April-May, 2026, sources said.

AI integration is key to Viksit Bharat: Nirmala Sitharaman

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI

Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday set a strategic road map for India's economic future, emphasising the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the establishment of regulatory predictability to achieve the vision of a Viksit Bharat.

She, along with Union Minister of State for Corporate Affairs Harsh Malhotra, was chairing a high-level Chintan Shivir (brainstorming session) of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs that commenced at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hampi in Vijayanagara district of Karnataka.

The session brought together the top brass of India's financial policy-makers, including all Secretaries of the two Ministries, the Chairmen of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), and the Chief Economic Adviser to the Central government.

The primary deliberations centered on the theme of "AI, Ease of Doing Business, and Financing for Viksit Bharat", where officials engaged in intensive discussions on strengthening institutional capacity and policy-making through technology-enabled systems.

The Union Finance Minister Ms. Sitharaman underscored the importance of process reforms to improve the ease of doing business, highlighting that the simplification of procedures and coordinated inter-departmental functioning are essential for a robust economy.

Reflecting on the choice of venue, Ms. Sitharaman spoke on the profound historical significance of the Vijayanagara region. She noted that the erstwhile empire represents the peak of Indian imperial power from barely 500 years ago, with its cultural and administrative imprint still visible across large parts of the subcontinent.

She, however, balanced this historical pride with a call for pragmatism, drawing the attention of senior officials to the stark contrasts within the Vijayanagara district.

The Union Finance Minister pointed out that while the region is home to magnificent world-heritage monuments, it also encompasses drought-prone areas struggling with low agricultural productivity and persistent human-animal conflict.

She emphasised that the vision for a developed India must remain grounded in these present-day development realities to ensure that economic policies effectively address the challenges faced by such regions.

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road
Bengaluru – 560 001. Phone No. 080-22265383 website : www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-68/3005/2025-26 Date: 20.12.2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)

Item Rate Tender under two cover bid system is invited as per the Karnataka Transparency Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible KPWD Class-1 (Civil) Contractors who have got adequate financial resources, state of the art technology, suitable construction equipments, technical man power & sufficient past experience in the following works :

Name of the Works : (1) Establishment of Knowledge, Wellbeing and Innovation City (KWIN City) of Sector-1 of Phase-2, Doddaballapura & Nelamangala Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District. **(2)** Establishment of Knowledge, Wellbeing and Innovation City (KWIN City) of Sector-2 of Phase-2, Doddaballapura & Nelamangala Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : **27.01.2026** upto **4.00 pm.**

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

Sd/-
Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/4596/Zen/2025-26

Man booked for harassment

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Rajagopalnagar police have registered a sexual harassment case against a man for allegedly subjecting a 32-year-old married woman to mental and physical harassment after offering her financial help during a crisis.

The complainant claimed that met the accused, Paritosh Yadav, through social media. The two developed a friendship. The woman reportedly borrowed ₹30,000 from the accused for her daughter's medical treatment.

The police said he used the loan as leverage to harass her and pressure her into a physical relationship. The police have registered a case

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Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, DEC. 22
RISE 06:37 SET 17:59
RISE 08:25 SET 19:59

TUESDAY, DEC. 23
RISE 06:38 SET 18:00
RISE 09:11 SET 20:52

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 24
RISE 06:38 SET 18:00
RISE 09:53 SET 21:44

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	29	20
Mysuru	28	11
Bengaluru	27	15

Bengaluru Today
26°C The weather will be dry. Day will be comfortable. Night will be cool and hazy.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
27°C Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Night also will be cool. Dry weather to occur.

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FIR against social media accounts for promoting obscene videos

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Central Division Cybercrime Police have registered an FIR against several social media accounts for allegedly promoting obscene videos that were going viral on social media platforms. Based on the complaint filed by a social media user, a case has been registered under various sections of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

Probe launched

A probe has been initiated into 28 links where the accused posted clips and screenshots of obscene videos on their social media accounts. The accused allegedly invited users to comment or send direct messages to access the full videos and also uploaded links on their bio. They allegedly used platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to post and promote such content.

Serious concern

The police said such posts were drawing people towards pornographic content, which was a serious concern as social media was used by people of all age groups.

The police have booked 28 social media accounts. The police said that the media users are involved in illegal activities just to promote their account and increase followers.

'Dangerous trend'

"This is a dangerous trend and leading to immoral activities will attract strict action," a police officer said.

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN:U40109KA1999SGC025521)

No.: CEE/Tr(Op)Z/KLB/SEE/AEE-3/2025-26/11280 & 11294 Date:19.12.2025

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)

KPTCL, Kalaburagi Transmission(Operation) Zone, invites tenders from the eligible bidders for the following bid enquiry no's.:

1) Bid Enquiry No.: KPTCL/TL/25-26/Ganadal LILO line Dtd. 19-12-2025 for Construction of 110KV LILO Line to 110KV Ganadal Sub-Station by utilizing 110KV DC towers from the tapping point of existing 110KV Kushtagi-Kanakagiri Line for a distance of 1.62Kms along with construction of 1 no. of Terminal bay at 110kV Ganadal sub-station in Yelaburga Taluk, Koppala District **on total turnkey basis,** including supply of all matching materials/equipment's and erection (including Civil works) of all materials/equipment's, testing and commissioning.

2) Bid Enquiry No.: KPTCL/TL/25-26/Yeradona LILO line Dtd.19-12-2025 for Construction of 110kV LILO line from the tapping point of existing 110kV Munirabad -II line to 110/11kV Yeradona sub-station along with construction of terminal bay at 110/11kV Yeradona sub-station in Karatagi Tq, Koppala Dist. for a distance of 4.936 km by utilizing the 110kV DC towers.

The Bids will be received through KPP portal only. The detailed Notification regarding the subject tenders can be got by logging on to **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** with hyperlink **'E Procurement KPTCL'** or to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in on or after 23.12.2025.** Any other details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/- Chief Engineer (Electy),
Transmission (Operation) Zone, 1st Floor,
Prasarana Bhavana, KPTCL, Sedam Road, Kalaburagi.

IDBI BANK
(CIN)L65190MH2004GOI148838
website: www.idbibank.in

IDBI Bank Ltd, Regional Office – Bengaluru city I Region
IDBI House, No-58 Mission Road, Bengaluru - 560027

This is to inform you that the locker holders of our Bengaluru city Branches relating to the following locker accounts have failed and neglected to pay the prescribed locker rent for a long time in spite of our various notices and demands made to them. As per the Terms and conditions agreed to by the locker holder, the bank will be at liberty to break open the said lockers in the event of non-payment of rent. Accordingly, it is proposed to break open the said locker on 23.03.2026 by serving the formalities and the respective locker holders are advised to approach the respective branch before the due date and settle the dues to avoid action. The charges for break open would be borne by the renters and the bank reserves the right to take legal action for recovery of the same along with rent arrears / other charges etc.

Sl No.	Branch Name & Address	Locker No	Due From	Hirer Name & Address
1	Mission Road –SOL 008 IDBI House, 58 Mission Road, Bengaluru - 560027 Phone: 080 -61451301	S10- 22	01.04.2022	Mr. Krishna Ganji No 402, 4th Floor, Sohann Horizon Apartments, Thimma Reddy Layout, Near Horamavu Bengaluru 560043
2	Mission Road –SOL 008 IDBI House, 58 Mission Road, Bengaluru - 560027 Phone: 080 -61451301	G1-72	01.04.2022	Mrs. Chandan Parbha Chindaliya Mr. Jitesh Sekhani No. 26/1, 2nd Floor, Srinivasa Nilaya, 2nd Main Road, Mission Road, Bengaluru - 560027
3	Mission Road –SOL 008 IDBI House, 58 Mission Road, Bengaluru - 560027 Phone: 080 -61451301	G3 -136	01.04.2022	Mr. Praveen Krishna Gopigari Mrs. V Jyoti No. 106, Lakshmi Krupa, 2nd Floor, 1st Cross Sarvabuma Nagar, Bengaluru - 560061
4	Mission Road –SOL 008 IDBI House, 58 Mission Road, Bengaluru - 560027 Phone: 080 -61451301	G6- 349	01.04.2022	Mrs. Gargi Singh Keonics Computer Training centre, Dollar Colony Rajmahal, HIG No.28, 3rd Cross, 1st Main, 2nd stage Bengaluru 560094
5	Sarakki Lake – SOL 024 No. 26/1, Sowbhagya complex, 24th Main, 5th Phase, JP Nagar, Sarakki lake, Bengaluru – 560078 Phone: 080 - 26594779	S3- 73	01.04.2022	Mr.Chandilya S Ramamoorthy Mrs. Sita Chandilya 176, Villa Prestige Oasis, Adde Viswanathapura, Rajankunte, Bengaluru 560064
6	Sarakki Lake – SOL 024 No. 26/1, Sowbhagya complex, 24th Main, 5th Phase, JP Nagar, Sarakki lake, Bengaluru – 560078 Phone: 080 - 26594779	S7 -152	01.04.2022	Ms. Mousumi Roy Mr. Udkar Shiva kumar No.33, Flat T301, 11th A Main, 13th Cross, Jayanagar 5th Block, Bengaluru 560041
7	Sarakki Lake – SOL 024 No. 26/1, Sowbhagya complex, 24th Main, 5th Phase, JP Nagar, Sarakki lake, Bengaluru – 560078 Phone: 080 - 26594779	S6-511	01.04.2022	Mrs. Meenakshi Bhandari, Mr. Sanjay Bhandari, Darpan, No 67, Shiridi Sai, South Avenue, Gottigere Bannerghatta, Bengaluru 560083
8	Sarakki Lake – SOL 024 No. 26/1, Sowbhagya complex, 24th Main, 5th Phase, JP Nagar, Sarakki lake, Bengaluru – 560078 Phone: 080 - 26594779	G16- 650	01.04.2022	Mr. Asgarali Nanabhai Saleh Mrs. Fatema Asgarali Saleh No-48, 22nd Main, 2nd cross, Rizwan, Masjid Road JP Nagar 5th Phase, Bengaluru 560078
9	Yelahanka – SOL 694 Dinakaran Complex #9, H.I.G, Sector A Yelahanka New Town, Bengaluru 560064 Phone: 080 28460901	G4- 22	01.04.2022	Mrs. Anjana Chandran Mr. Chandran Muthukaruppan No. 72 B, Sobha Emerald, Behind Jakkur Flying School Jakkur, Bengaluru 560064
10	Jayanagar – SOL 1140 VASAVI – No 75/757, 10th Main, 4th block Jayanagar, Bengaluru 560011 Phone: 080 – 26644577/8	G3-1	01.04.2022	Mr. Imran Khan A Mr. A Younus khan Mr. A Tariq Khan No.29 Sidde gowda lane, Doddamavalli, Bengaluru south Basavangudi, Bengaluru 560004
11	Chitradurga – SOL 1241 Maganur Commercial Complex, Site No. 1&2, BD Road, Chitradurga 577501 Phone: 08194 2212141/5	S2-11	01.04.2022	Mrs. Safeena Begum, Mr. Riyaz Pasha Mr. Waqar Anjum, MP Manzil, 3rd Cross, Prasanna Talkies Road Horapete, Chitradurga - 577501
12	Chitradurga – SOL 1241 Maganur Commercial, Complex, Site No. 1&2 BD Road, Chitradurga 577501 08194 2212141/5	S2- 14	01.04.2022	Mr. S Suresh Mrs. Thippamma S/o Suraiah, Range Forest office, Bevinamarada katte Road, 5th Division, Chitradurga 577522
13	Chitradurga – SOL 1241 Maganur Commercial Complex, Site No. 1&2, BD Road, Chitradurga 577501. Ph: 08194 2212141/5	S2- 16	01.04.2022	Mrs. K B Anusha, Mr. D S Ramesh No 56, 8th Cross, IUDP Layout, Jeranjivi Clinic, Chitradurga - 577501
14	Vijayanagar – SOL 1672 No 1268/7, 23rd Cross, Govindaraja nagar Magadi Main Road, Near KHB Colony Bus stop Vijayanagar – 560079. Phone: 080 – 23102104/03	G2 - 9	01.04.2022	Mr. M B Somanna No 45, 1st Main Road, 1st Stage, 1st Main Road KHB Colony, Bengaluru 560079
15	Peenya – SOL 1724 M V Complex, Plot No 25 B, & C, 4th Cross, 3rd Main, 2nd Phase, Peenya, Bengaluru – 560058 Phone: 080 – 29919664	G2 – 25	01.04.2022	Mr. Lakshmana N Mrs. Pallavi N U No.380, 4th Main, 5th B cross, Rajagopalanagara Peenya 2nd stage, Bengaluru 560058
16	R R Nagar- SOL 2115 Door No 41, Old No 21, Opp RNS College, Uttarahalli – Kengeri Road, Chennasandra, Bengaluru 560061. Phone: 080 – 28611300	G2 – 2	01.04.2022	M/s. New GFC Biriyani Centre # 864, Dr. Vishnu Vardhan Road, Channasandra, Opp to Adhishwar Bengaluru 560098

Date: 22.12.2025
Place: Bengaluru

Sd/-
Authorized Signatory

THE HINDU
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CACHE

U.S. President Donald Trump and FBI Director Kash Patel in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, D.C., U.S. on December 12. REUTERS

How South Asians became targets of racist hate on Elon Musk's X

As digital rights advocates track rising levels of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and racism on X after Elon Musk's 2022 takeover of Twitter, many have noted a distinct spike in hateful rhetoric aimed at South Asians, targeting their race, skin colour, and religious beliefs

Sahana Venugopal

The story so far:

"Imagine the smell," tweeted Nik Pash, responding to a photo that showed several developers at a xAI hackathon. A large number of them appeared to be of South Asian ethnicity. Mr. Pash's tweet drew outrage as the phrase was generally used to mock people perceived as being unhygienic. Plus, it came from someone who headed artificial intelligence at a coding startup. Mr. Pash was let go after many users criticised his post. The outrage grew as multiple other X users responded with shared negative comments about H1-B visas, Indians working in IT, deportations, bad smells, body odour, open defecation, and American population replacement. While many supported Mr. Pash's removal from the company, others were outraged by what they felt was a harmless joke. This incident highlighted an issue plaguing X: racism against South Asians.

What is the nature of abuse on X?

As digital rights advocates track rising levels of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism, and transphobia on X after Elon Musk's 2022 takeover of Twitter, many have noted a distinct spike in hateful rhetoric aimed at South Asians this year, targeting their race, skin colour, religious beliefs, careers in America, and/or migration history.

Graphic comments referred to several prominent X users as "street shi***rs"; insulted their religious identity; mischaracterised them as dirty; or called on them to be deported and stripped of their visa privileges. The hate was also layered, with women facing misogynistic abuse in addition to the racism while Muslim users were hit with Islamophobia and Hindu users faced anti-Hindu hate.

Free AI tools with poor guardrails, including Grok's own photo-to-video generator on X, made it easy for malicious users to generate racist deepfake photos and videos of individuals. Several verified X users engage in this type of harassment.

Which South Asians were abused?

U.S. conservative politician Vivek Ramaswamy, New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani, Senior White House Policy Advisor on AI Sriram Krishnan, FBI Director Kash Patel, and Former U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Chair Lina Khan might hold radically different political views, but all five were subjected to disturbing levels of racist hate on Elon Musk's X. When Mr. Ramaswamy on November 1 posted a photo with his children to greet X followers for Halloween, commenters told him to go to India, and used the racial slur "pajeet" against the family. Furthermore, one user even turned the photo into a deepfake video to show Mr. Ramaswamy dumping brown liquid over his children.

Mr. Ramaswamy and Mr. Patel were also hit with graphic images and racist comments when they posted Diwali wishes on their X accounts last month, with both individuals being told to return to India.

Their Hindu gods were referred to as "demons", and shown broken to pieces before a crucifix in an AI image.

Despite receiving U.S. President Donald Trump's endorsement, Mr. Krishnan was slammed with racist abuse in late 2024 and doxxed by right-wing influencer Laura Loomer last year. Ms. Loomer later apologised and claimed it was an accident. X users also trolled Mr. Krishnan over his appearance and his Indian background.

How have racist comments against South Asians increased recently?

The Center for the Study of Organized Hate (CSOH), a non-profit, non-partisan think tank in the U.S., reported a "visible uptick of anti-Indian hate" on X after Mr. Krishnan's appointment to his U.S. White House role, and also after a post on X by Mr. Ramaswamy in December 2024, when H1-B visa debates were raging. "Since then, anti-Indian racism on social media, including X, has shown no signs of abating," observed the organisation.

After studying a dataset of 680 posts on X targeting Indians and Indian-origin communities that received over 281 million views between July 1 and September 7, CSOH reported that almost 70% of the posts focused on deportation, invasion, and job theft.

"Immigration and calls for deportation are thus the central pillars and main drivers of anti-Indian racism on X," explained CSOH in the report, adding that "racist slurs and mockery, though less voluminous, also play a crucial role in normalising and reinforcing anti-Indian hate on X. The repeated use of racialised terms like "pajeet" or tropes of Indians as dirty or smelly provides the cultural scaffolding for more explicit exclusionary and hateful rhetoric."

Mr. Mamdani and Ms. Khan faced both racism and Islamophobia on X, with the New York City mayor-elect frequently being linked to terrorism because he openly embraced his Muslim identity. One example was U.S. politician Andy Ongles, who on October 29 posted, "Think of how many future Zohran Mamdani's we can stop by mass deportations. Let's deport them now before they are naturalised. Subversive immigrants must NEVER get citizenship."

Mr. Mamdani's legal status was also questioned by U.S. President Donald Trump, triggering further abuse against the politician on X.

Though former FTC Chair Ms. Khan is not vocal about her religious beliefs, the London-born American antitrust scholar was nevertheless attacked online over her surname, her appearance, and her parents' Pakistani heritage. Ms. Khan recently became a target after she was named the co-chair of Mr. Mamdani's transition team.

X user Paul Sperry, verified with a blue check mark and with over half a million followers, posted a photo of what he claimed was Ms. Khan's "family home" on X, possibly doxxing her and her family members. He further claimed that she "hates capitalism and is pushing socialism on all New Yorkers." In another post, he referred to the former regulator as a "TROJAN HORSE?", called her "Ethnic-Pakistani Muslim" and said she would be able to "place fellow Muslims throughout the government".

The normalisation of South Asian hate as well as mockery on X has also impacted everyday tech workers and social media users.

What events triggered such hate?

Apart from the souring relationship between the U.S. and India after Mr. Trump's return to the White House, the President's strong and repeated emphasis on the removal of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives has made more people view minority groups in a poor light.

Referring to them as "illegal and immoral discrimination programs," his rhetoric unfairly showed South Asians as outsiders taking over American jobs.

Referring to the H-1B visa programme for workers, Mr. Trump said in a September 19 proclamation that the "large-scale replacement of American workers through systemic abuse of the program has undermined both our economic and national security".

A U.S. government report published this year stated that out of the H-1B petitions approved in FY 2024, 71% were for beneficiaries whose country of birth was India.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

With 2025 coming to an end, dictionaries and round-up articles have reviewed the year in words. A quiz on some words, phrases, and terms that became popular this year

K. Abhinaya

QUESTION 1

In a year that saw social media growing leaps and bounds and AI chatbots gaining prominence, this word encapsulates the one-sided emotional connections people form with media figures. It was declared the word of 2025 by Cambridge Dictionary. Identify the word.

QUESTION 2

This word refers to the vacant expression that members of this particular generation seem to have in a situation where a spoken response is usually expected. The word gained popularity on social media platforms prompting cultural and psychological interest. What is the word?

QUESTION 3

U.S. President Donald Trump's swearing-in ceremony was a broligarchy. What does the word broligarchy mean in this sentence?

QUESTION 4

If brain rot was one of the catchwords of 2024, Dictionary.com's pick for 2025 encapsulates the word aptly. The origin of the modern use of the word is thought to be from a song. Identify the word.

QUESTION 5

A word that refers to the low quality content that is produced using AI. It was earlier associated with food waste. Identify the word.

Visual question:

One of the words on the shortlist for Oxford's word of the year pertains to a growing fad related to one's lifestyle. This person is one of the faces of this pursuit. Name the word and the person. GETTY IMAGES

Questions and Answers to the December 19 edition of the daily quiz:

1. Messi's jersey number is this number. It was worn in football by legends such as X and Y. **Ans: Ten; Pele and Diego Maradona**
2. Last month, Messi visited this place and said he hoped to return there one day. **Ans: Barcelona**
3. This Uruguayan player provided the most assists for Messi for his Barcelona goals. **Ans: Luis Suarez**
4. This account apart from Cristiano Ronaldo's has more followers on Instagram than Messi. **Ans: Instagram**
5. Messi has scored the most goals against this club. **Ans: Sevilla**
6. A 70-ft Messi statue been installed in this city. **Ans: Kolkata**

Visual: Name this Argentinian. **Ans: Pablo Aimar**

Early Birds: Sadhan Panda| Vibhuti Singh| Siddhartha Viswanathan| Ambarin Aslam

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

He was censured for his attitude

He has gotten too big for his boots ever since he won that spelling bee last year

S. Upendran

How is the word 'censure' pronounced? (G. Rajeevan)

There are several ways of pronouncing the word, and one of them is the following. The first syllable sounds like the 'sen' in 'sent', 'sense' and 'sentence', while the following 's' is pronounced like the 'sh' in 'ship', 'shape' and 'shine'. The final 'ure' sounds like the 'a' in 'china'. One possible way of pronouncing this rather formal word, which can be used both as a noun and a verb, is 'SEN-sher', with the stress on the first syllable. It comes from the Latin 'censura' meaning 'judgement' or 'opinion'. When it was first used in English, 'censure' had a neutral meaning; it basically meant to evaluate something. With the passage of time, however, it acquired a negative connotation. Nowadays, the word is mostly used to mean to criticise someone harshly – in other words, when someone 'censures' you, the individual expresses a strong disapproval of what you have done. This criticism usually comes from someone in authority – it could be your boss, a judge, a policeman, etc. When a member of your family or a good friend of yours makes similar negative comments about you, it is seen more as 'criticism' than 'censure'.

The press and the public strongly criticised the players for their lack of application.

The Board censured the team for its sloppy fielding.

The team's lack of discipline during the tour came under severe censure.

What is the meaning and origin of 'get too big for one's boots'? (D. Vibha, Pune)

The expression is mostly used in informal contexts in British English to mean 'arrogant' or 'conceited'. When someone complains that you have become too big for your boots, what the individual is suggesting is that you think no end of yourself; you strongly believe that you are more important than all the others in the room. Everybody else pales in comparison to you.

Ever since Janani won the tournament, she's gotten too big for her boots.

Since his promotion as Manager, Jaidev refuses to acknowledge his friends. He's gotten too big for his boots.

Americans tend to say, 'too big for one's britches' – sometimes spelt 'breeches'. In the past, trousers or pants that covered an individual from his waist to his knees were called 'britches'. It is possible to pronounce 'britches' and 'breeches' the same way. The words can be rhymed with 'witches' and 'riches'.

Stay level-headed! Don't get too big for your britches/breeches.

The idiom suggests that you have become so swollen with pride that your boots/trousers no longer fit.

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Aerobic:
depending on free oxygen or air; enhancing respiratory and circulatory efficiency

Synonyms: aerophilic, aerophilous

Usage: *Running is an aerobic activity while weightlifting is not.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/aerobicpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɛəˈɹəʊ.bɪk/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Residents face crisis after demolition

Over 150 houses were razed to the ground during a demolition drive, leaving over 500 families homeless; alternative accomodation not provided

Rishita Khanna
BENGALURU

Household items of displaced families were bundled and kept in the open on Saturday, a day after the civic authorities brought down over 150 houses during a demolition drive at Kogilu in Yelahanka.

While some women said they had not drunk water throughout the day because there were no toilets left after their houses were demolished, others spoke about the difficulty of breastfeeding their children without even a place to sit.

Men in the area, meanwhile, said they were worried about loans they had taken to meet daily needs, now left with debts but no shelter. For families in Kogilu Layout, multiple problems unfolded at the same time after the families, living in informal settlements, turned homeless.

On December 20, government agencies demolished over 150 houses in Fakeer Colony and parts of Waseem Layout in Kogilu Layout, Yelahanka, leaving around 500 people homeless. With no alternative accommodation provided, many families stayed in a nearby government Urdu school. However, residents said they were now worried that they would be asked to vacate the school when it reopens on Monday morning, once again leaving them homeless.

Uncertainty looms

The uncertainty has also worsened the financial stress many families were already under. Several men said they had taken loans at high interest rates to manage daily expenses, medical needs, or temporary housing over the years. "I took a loan of ₹3 lakh just last month. I sold my two-wheeler to repay part of it. Now, there is no house, and the loan is still there," Mohammed Zaishan, 53, said.

Several women told *The Hindu* that they were menstruating but had no access to sanitary products, clean clothes or any space, as all their belongings were destroyed. "Everything was inside the house. We don't even have spare clothes. All of us have been avoiding drinking water for long hours because there were no toilets left after the demolition. If we drink water, where do we go?" Soukanya M., a native of Bagepalli who works as a daily-wage labourer in Bengaluru, said, while feeding her three-month-old baby.

Bhanupriya, an LLB student, said all her study material, including her examination identity card, was buried under the debris. They also pointed out to children who were left exposed to the cold, asking, "Does the government have no humanity? It is peak winter, we have no roof, our children are falling sick, and we don't even have blankets."

Displaced residents also protested outside the office of MLA for Byatarayanapura Krishna Byre Gowda, demanding alternative accommodation and relief. The residents, however, said Mr. Gowda did not address their concerns and asked them to return again on Monday. They argued that their address was listed on electricity meters, Aadhaar and ration cards, and questioned how the government could now label them as illegal occupants. An assessment conducted by Sangama NGO among the 34 households of the Fakeer community showed that while most families possess basic identity documents, access to welfare schemes and social security remains extremely limited. Moreover, the data highlights that families whose homes were razed to the ground were long-term residents with verified identities, not transient or undocumented occupants.

The survey found near-universal Aadhaar coverage, with 33 of the 34 households enrolled, and 29 families holding voter identity cards. As many as 25 households have PAN cards, while only 21 families have bank accounts.

Income and caste certificates, crucial for accessing education and welfare benefits, are available with only 15 households, leaving about 19 households without documents required for school admissions, housing schemes, and reservation benefits.

4 arrested for assault

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

The police have arrested four people, including a teacher-couple facing the charge of assaulting an inmate of the Divya Jyoti Mentally Challenged Residential School in Navanagar of Bagalkot district.

Officers arrested teachers Akshay Inglekar and his wife Anandi Hindulkar for mercilessly assaulting 16-year-old Deepak Rathod, a student of the school.

His father in a complaint stated that Inglekar attacked the boy with a belt and plastic pipe, while his wife threw chilli powder in the boy's eyes.

The police have also taken into custody fellow teachers Vitthal and Vishal. An FIR also names Ravikant Budihal, among others, who have been arrested.

It lists offences under the Juvenile Justice Act, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, and BNS, among other laws.

The incident is three months old, but the boy's parents learnt of the offence after a video surfaced on social media.

A team led by Gajanan Sutar, Deputy Superintendent of Police, inspected the place and seized materials used for the attack.

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DATE EXTENSION NOTICE

Due to administrative reasons the date of submission of the following EOI invited is extended as follows:

Name of Service	Last Date & Time for Submission of EoI Documents
Concept Design, Detailed Project Report (DPR) Preparation, and Execution Support for Establishing the International State-of-the-Art Sanitation Experium at ASCI College Park Campus, Hyderabad	5th January, 2026, 5:00 PM IST

EoI documents i.e. form and other terms & conditions/details can be downloaded from ASCI Hyderabad. **Website: (https://www.asci.org.in).**
For queries, if any, mail: ankurp@asci.org.in

Car wash attendant booked for assaulting couple at Varthur

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Varthur police have registered a non-cognisable report against a car wash attendant and three of his friends for barging into the house of a labourer couple in an inebriated state, assaulting them, and locking them inside their home on Friday night.

The accused also allegedly threatened the couple, warning them of dire consequences if they pursued a complaint.

The victims, Samrat Dafadar, 35, and his wife, Meem Begum, 27, told *The Hindu* that the incident occurred when they had just returned home from their mobile sales and service shop and were about to have dinner. The accused allegedly knocked on the door calling out Meem Begum by name.

When Samrat opened the door, the men, who were drunk, allegedly tried to force their way inside. As he resisted and raised an alarm, the accused allegedly dragged him out of the house and assaulted him. They also attempted to snatch the gold chain he was wearing, but he managed to hold on to it.

The accused also allegedly threatened the couple, warning them of dire consequences if they pursued a complaint

Meem Begum rushed to her husband's aid but was allegedly punched in the face by one of the accused, who was holding a sharp object. She sustained injuries. The accused then allegedly pushed the couple back into the house and locked it from outside before fleeing.

The incident occurred in a BDA EWS apartment complex at Gunjur Palya, where several families reside. Samrat later managed to call the police who arrived at the spot and rescued the couple.

The couple moved into the apartment three months ago, and this is the second such incident they have faced. According to Samrat, the main accused Manju is a driver and a habitual offender. He was earlier a tenant in the same house but was asked to vacate by the owner allegedly due to his unruly behaviour.

After the couple moved in, Manju allegedly began targeting them and harassing Meem Begum by passing lewd comments. "We had complained to the house owner earlier, but he asked us to inform him if it happened again. We fear for our safety, especially as neighbours did not come to our help," Samrat said.

Police said that Manju has been involved in similar cases earlier.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, along with Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao and Home Minister G. Parameshwara, handing over a kit after administing polio drops to a child during the Pulse Polio immunisation programme in Bengaluru.

Pulse Polio drive: City records 95% coverage

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Pulse Polio Immunisation Programme recorded a significant number on its first day in Bengaluru, with more than 10.77 lakh children vaccinated against a target of 11,34,988, an overall coverage of about 95%.

The campaign, which was launched by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, was being carried out across all five city corporations, namely Bengaluru Central, West, East, South, and North. On the first day, the performance ranged between 94% and 98% across the corporations, with Bengaluru East recording the highest coverage of approximately 98%.

Vaccination efforts included booth-based immunisation, house-to-house visits, and transit vaccination at public locations. Transit points alone saw over 1.04 lakh children receiving oral polio drops, while a total of 66,798 oral polio vaccines vials were administered across the city.

Labourer abducted and killed over love affair

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 25-year-old labourer was murdered by his uncle and two others allegedly over a love affair after the girl's family opposed the relationship, in Kunigal on Thursday.

The deceased, Cheluvaraju, was in a relationship with his uncle's daughter for the past four years but the accused started opposing it and threatened Chelavaraju to stay away.

The girl's father and relatives, allegedly conspired to eliminate Cheluvaraju. On December 18 at around 4.30 p.m., the accused allegedly took Cheluvaraju from Kunigal town in a car and murdered him by slitting his throat with a machete, between Gattipur-Aralikatte Doddi in Magadi taluk.

Based on a complaint filed by Anna Raju, the victim's brother, the Kunigal police arrested Kempanarasimhaiah, 48, Manjunath C., 40, and Ramakrishna, 40.

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FORM GSTR-9* and FORM GSTR-9C# for F.Y. 2024-2025

CBC 15502/13/0046/2526

What is FORM GSTR-9?
FORM GSTR-9 is a comprehensive yearly return that consolidates all the information already submitted in the monthly/quarterly GST returns—such as FORM GSTR-1 and FORM GSTR-3B.

What is FORM GSTR-9C?
FORM GSTR-9C is a reconciliation statement comparing data declared in FORM GSTR-9 with the audited financial statements, along with certification by a CA/CMA.

*Taxpayers required to file FORM GSTR-9	#Taxpayers required to file FORM GSTR-9C
All GST taxpayers having Aggregate Annual Turnover above ₹2 Crore (during F.Y. 2024-2025) except the following: » Input Service Distributor » Casual Taxable Person » TDS Deductor » TCS Collector » Non-Resident Taxable Person	Taxpayers whose Aggregate Annual Turnover is above ₹5 Crore (during F.Y. 2024-2025) need to file a self-certified reconciliation statement in FORM GSTR-9C along with the Annual Return in FORM GSTR-9.

Late Filing of FORM GSTR-9 and FORM GSTR-9C will attract late fee

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Confusion over leadership issue created at the local level: Kharge

I will look into a letter sent by leaders to resolve the situation, says Congress chief; DKS dismisses talk of rift with CM

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI/BENGALURU

With a section of the Congress leaders hoping that the high command will bring an end to the confusion caused by the tussle over leadership, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday – without naming anyone – blamed the local leaders for having created the confusion.

"Congress high command has not created any confusion. It is some leaders in the State [Congress] who are doing it," Mr. Kharge told presspersons in Kalaburagi on Sunday.

He was responding to queries over a letter sent to him by some leaders seeking intervention to resolve the infighting in the State unit of the party. "I have not received any such letter so far. I will try to understand the intention of it once it reaches me."

For over two months, the tussle over leadership between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has intensified with public statements being issued by their followers in favour of their leaders.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge addressing presspersons at his residence in Kalaburagi on Sunday. ARUN KULKARNI

'Power-sharing pact'

The government crossing the midway mark of its tenure on November 20 has rekindled speculation over a "power-sharing agreement" between the two leaders, who are now looking at the party's high command for a resolution.

Cautioning against projecting the Congress as being dependent on one person, Mr. Kharge said, "No one should claim that they alone brought the party to power or built the Congress. The party has been built by its workers. Every leader and worker had a role in strengthening the party."

Amid the show of one-upmanship by both camps, Mr. Shivakumar met his fierce opponent and sacked former Minister K.N. Rajanna, who has been publicly supporting Mr. Siddaramaiah to complete the full five- year term, on Saturday night.

While both leaders did not reveal the purpose of the meeting, it is learnt that Mr. Shivakumar wanted to offer truce in his bid to take every leader into confidence as he mounts pressure on the Chief Minister. The Deputy Chief Minister had also met Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi, another confidant of the Chief Minister recently.

Sources said that the meeting was to also seek Mr. Rajanna's support to Congress MLC S. Ravi, a relative of Mr. Shivakumar, in the election to the post of Apex Bank president.

"Is Chief Minister close to him (Mr. Rajanna)? He (Mr. Rajanna) is close to me too. Who is not close to him (Mr. Rajanna)? I made Mr. Rajanna the president of Apex Bank during S.M. Krishna's term as Chief Minister. All Congress leaders are working together. We are all friends and colleagues," Mr. Shivakumar told presspersons when asked if he had met Mr. Rajanna to garner support.

On the leadership tussle, he said, "Are not Chief Minister and I working like brothers? I do not have any differences with any Congress leaders. Have I had any difference with the Chief Minister since he came to the party 16 years ago? I have not spoken against any one."

The Deputy Chief Minister also claimed that there was no confusion in the party, and said that it was a creation of the BJP and the media. "The BJP is trying to cover up its own internal mess," he said.

Delhi visit

The Deputy Chief Minister, who will be in Delhi this week to meet Union Ministers, is also like to meet the party's central leaders to push for his case, sources close to him said. Incidentally, the Chief Minister will also be in Delhi likely next week to attend the Congress Working Committee meeting.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rajanna said that the discussion revolved around strengthening the party. When asked about his opposition to Mr. Shivakumar in the past, he clarified, "There is no change in my stand. Whatever I had said then, I stand by it. Ultimately, high command matters on the leadership issue. The Chief Minister has also reiterated that the high command matters."

CORRIDORS OF POWER

When ruling party wanted Opposition to speak

The just-concluded session of the State legislature in Belagavi saw a rare incident where the ruling Congress not only wanted the Opposition BJP members to speak, but also wanted their statements recorded.

Members Harish Poonja and Sharanu Salagar had submitted questions to Madhu Bangarappa *(in picture)*, Minister for School Education and Literacy, on issues related to schools.

They were generous in their praise for Mr. Bangarappa about one particular programme – his decision to start Karnataka Public Schools (KPS) in every gram panchayat. Mr. Poonja also requested that the government take steps to close down government schools with zero or a few students.

The Minister, who has been facing flak for the move on closure [what the government calls "merger"], was quick to ask Speaker U.T. Khader to make sure that this demand was entered into the Assembly records, just to document the fact that people's representatives had made such a demand.

"I want to send a message to society through this House that we are not closing down any government schools out of its own volition," he said.

He went on to say that there had been a lot of negative reporting about KPS. "There is a lot of speculation that we are closing down rural government schools in the name of merger. I want people to know that such demands are coming from people's representatives," said a gleeful Minister.

Demolition of drug peddlers' houses?

P. Chidambaram, former Union Home Minister, took to social media to express concern about Karnataka government's plans to demolish the houses of those involved in narcotic offences.

He said Home Minister G. Parameshwara had warned of such a punitive action against offenders of NDPS Act.

Karnataka's Congress leaders, however, argue that Dr. Parameshwara did not say any such thing.

At a dinner meeting recently, a Congress leader from Belagavi went around telling reporters that the Home Minister had said in Kannada that the government was trying to get the offenders vacate their houses – "*Mane Bidisuvudu*" – and not demolition -- "*Mane Beelisuvudu*."

He said that reporters had misunderstood the minister.

The claim divided the reporters, with some saying that the Minister had meant demolition, while the others claimed he was misunderstood.

Speaking in the Legislative Council, Dr. Parameshwara gave a detailed response on the menace of drug abuse in the State.

However, there was silence on whether he meant "*bidisuvudu*" or "*beelisuvudu*."

Polite but firm message

Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader was polite but firm in his message regarding the dress code to an MLA who came to the House in a T-shirt in the just-concluded legislature session at Belagavi.

While Congress member H.D. Ranganath was speaking on an obituary motion, observing that he had come in a T-shirt unlike the practice of wearing formal dress, the Speaker told him, "You look nice in a T-shirt, no doubt. But you look even better when you wear formal dress."

An apologetic Dr. Ranganath clarified that he rushed to the House from the airport in T-shirt as he could not get the time to change.

Rishkesh Bahadur Desai
B.S. Satish Kumar

Members and leaders of CPI (M) staging protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Sunday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

CPI(M) urges State to reject Labour Codes

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Urging the State government to not implement the four Labour Codes notified by the Centre, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has sought a labour conference, including representatives of political parties and trade unions, on the lines of Kerala model to discuss the adverse effects of these codes.

It has also asked the State government to reject Viksit Bharat G Ram G Act brought by the Centre and extend guaranteed employment in urban areas too.

"Contract and outsourced employment that does not provide security should be regularised. Social Security Act for workers should be implemented.

"The minimum wages for non-permanent employees in private sector and gram panchayat workers should be increased to ₹36,000 per month and provide a minimum pension of ₹9,000 for the retired," stated a petition submitted to the State government here.

State notifies auction of 569 liquor vends in Jan. to raise resources

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State government, which is hoping to bridge revenue deficit and raise resources, has announced the timeline to auction 569 discontinued/unallotted liquor licences across Karnataka.

The live e-auction to bring transparency in allocation will be held between January 13 and January 20, 2026, and is expected to bring between ₹600 crore and ₹1,000 crores to the cash-starved exchequer.

While the base price in some interior rural areas has been fixed at ₹70 lakh, the highest base price of ₹1.5 crore has been fixed for 101 licences in Bengaluru city.

For certain licences in Mangaluru and Mysuru, the base price is ₹1.1 crore and in Tumakuru base price is ₹1 crore.

Apart from monetisation of land and increasing excise duty on liquor, e-auction of liquor licences was among the means to raise resources to bridge the revenue deficit. The State is staring at a reduction in revenue between ₹15,000 crore and ₹18,000 crores this fiscal even as it is under pressure to fund its five guarantee schemes totalling about ₹60,000 crore annually.

The notification for e-auction through the MSTC portal was issued on Friday, and the auctioned licence will be granted for a period of five excise years for the period ending June 30, 2030.

The e-auction of licences had been announced by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who holds the Finance portfolio, in the Budget for 2025-2026.

Of the total licences being e-auctioned, 24% will be reserved for Scheduled Castes (17%) and Scheduled Tribes (7%).

Within the 17% reservation for Scheduled Castes, the newly implemented internal reservation matrix of 6% each to Category A (Dalit Left-Madigas) and Category B (Dalit Right-Holeyas), and 5% to Category C (Lambani, Bhovi, Korama and Koracha along with 59 Alemari-nomadic communities) will be provided.

The e-auction of licences has generated interest in the liquor industry since the last allocation of liquor licences in the State was in 1992-1993.

In the absence of any fresh licences, the current licences are being leased out by licences holders at premium rates, especially in the urban centres.

A note from the government said that amendments had been made to the Excise Rules. The process to register bidders will commence on Monday, and training to the prospective bidders and district-level e-auction nodal officers will be held between December 23, 2025 and January 7, 2026.

'Vijayanagar legacy offers lessons for inclusive growth'

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI

Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said that the ideals of prosperity and inclusive governance reflected in the Vijayanagar Empire remain relevant to India's goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Ms. Sitharaman, who visited the UNESCO World Heritage site at Hampi in Vijayanagara district along with a team of 120 officers from the Union Ministry of Finance, said that the visit enabled officials to understand the historical, administrative and economic significance of the erstwhile empire.

"The message of Vijayanagar, 'Prosperity for all', aligns with the principles guiding the current public policy. As preparations are under way for the forthcoming Union Budget, the visit offers perspective on building a prosperous and inclusive India," she pointed out.

Earlier, Ms. Sitharaman planted saplings of tamarind, custard apple and other species on the Hampi Development Authority premises near Kamalapur. She also participated in the National Pulse Polio Programme at the Community Health Centre in Kamalapur by administering polio drops to children.

Man held for creating fake website of Kollur temple

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

The Udupi police have arrested a 21-year-old man for allegedly creating a fake website of Kollur Mookambika Temple and cheating people by making devotees to book rooms using that website. The accused have identified as Nazir Hussain of Rajasthan, the police said.

In the complaint on November 3, the temple's executive officer Prashanth Kumar Shetty stated that, as against the original website http://karnatakatemplesaccomodation.com, a fake website 'Karnataka temple accommodation' was created.

Hussain was booked for offences under several sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and IT Act.

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

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Office of the Chief Engineer (UWP), 6th Floor, Kaveri Bhavan K.G.Road, Bengaluru - 560 009

Sl. No.	Division	IFT Number	Amount put to tender / EMD (in Rs.)	Last Date & time for Submission of Tender	Date & Time for Opening of Tender
1	(WWM) V-Valley-1	BWSSB/EE(WWM-V.V)-1/PB/1157/ 2025-26, Date: 18.12.2025	Rs.88.35 Lakhs / Rs. 1,76,800/-	29.12.2025 upto 5:00 PM	30.12.2025 at 5:30 PM

Sd/- Executive Engineer (WWM-V.Valley)-1

Office of the Chief Engineer (North), 6th Floor, Kaveri Bhavan K.G.Road, Bengaluru - 560 009

2	North-East	BWSSB/EE(N-E)/TO/PB/3461/ 2025-26, Date: 18.12.2025 (2nd Call), Category - 1	Rs.30,38,316/- / Rs. 30,500/-	30.12.2025 upto 4:00 PM	31.12.2025 after 3:00 PM
		BWSSB/EE(N-E)/TO/PB/3462/ 2025-26, Date: 18.12.2025 (2nd Call), Category - 2A	Rs.12,13,670/- / Rs. 15,200/-		

Sd/- Executive Engineer (North-East)

Office of the Chief Engineer, (Kaveri-O&M), 8th Floor, Kaveri Bhavan K.G.Road, Bengaluru - 560 009

3	(Kaveri-O&M)-2	BWSSB/ EE (K-O&M)-2/PB/ 2080/2025-26, Date: 18.12.2025 (SC- Category)	Rs.65,61,942/- / Rs.66,000/-	29.12.2025 upto 4:00 PM	30.12.2025 at 5:00 PM
4		BWSSB/ EE (K-O&M)-2/PB/ 2081/2025-26, Date: 18.12.2025 (SC-Category)	Rs.13,53,495/- / Rs.17,000/-		
5		BWSSB/EE (K-O&M)-2/ PB/2082/2025-26, Date: 18.12.2025	Rs.6,22,543/- / Rs.20,000/-		
6		BWSSB/EE (K-O&M)-2/PB/ 2083/2025-26, Date: 18.12.2025 (ST-Categogry)	Rs.15,85,479/- / Rs.20,000/-		
7		BWSSB/EE (K-O&M)-2/ PB/2084/2025-26, Date: 18.12.2025	Rs.22,45,333/- / Rs.50,000/-		

Sd/- Executive Engineer (Kaveri-O&M)-2

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the above signed office during the working hours.

DIPR/CP/4578/SA/2025-26

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

REMEMBRANCE

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22.12.2025

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, **SHUBHANGI** Kamal Shah, d/o; Nalin Desai, r/o; 17/18 Bloomingdale Layout, Factory Kasavanahalli Carmelaram, Blr –560035. Have changed my name as Shubhangi Shah.

I, **Prakhar** Kumar R/o 1-d Rbd Stillwaters Apartment, Lakedew Residency, Harluru Rd, Haruluru Bangalore 560068 have changed my minor daughter's name from Pranika to Pranika Kumar for all purposes.

I, **RIPAL** Chirag Patel, d/o; Mahendrakumar Ranchhodbhai Patel, r/o; No–305, Block F, Balaji Elegance, S.V Road, Blr–560066. Have changed my name as Ripal Patel.

I, **PRIYA** Venkatram, W/o K S Venkatram, R/at No.53, Sri Shardha, Between 15th and 16th Cross, East Park Road, Malleswaram West, Bengaluru-560055, have changed my name from Priya Venkatram to K Priya Vardhini Venkatram where K is abbreviation for Kasi vide affidavit dated 20/12/2025 sworn before Notary K.S.Giridhar, Bengaluru.

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KCR vows to launch agitation over delay in irrigation project

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) president and former Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao announced on Sunday that the party would soon launch a massive people's movement in erstwhile Mahabubnagar, Ranga Reddy and Nalgonda, to expose the 'slackness' of the Congress government in executing the Palamuru-Ranga Reddy Lift Irrigation Project (PRLIP).

He also slammed the Centre for "returning the Detailed Project Report (DPR)", and warned that the party would not spare the Union government.

'CM neglects project'

Addressing the media at Telangana Bhavan on Sunday, KCR accused Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy of completely neglecting the PRLIP project over the past two years.

"Not even a tub of earth has been moved for the project, which was intended to irrigate seven lakh acres in the most backward areas of the erstwhile Mahabubnagar district alone," he said.

Elaborating on the projects conceived during his tenure as the Chief Minister, KCR said that the Palamuru-RR project was proposed with a net allocation of 90.81 tmcft of water from the Krishna River. "We planned the project expecting a total allocation of 170 tmcft," he said.

Claiming that the Centre had recently returned the DPR of the project, the former Chief Minister questioned the State government's silence on the issue. "We want to know who is pressuring them to remain silent despite grave injustice meted out to the State," he said, holding Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu responsible for returning the DPR.

KCR further claimed that the BRS government had already spent ₹27,000 crore out of the estimated cost of ₹35,000 crore for the project and acquired 27,000 acres of land.

He slammed Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, alleging that he had written to the Centre agreeing to a proposal on an allocation of only 45 tmcft of water for the PRLIP project.

Revanth invites KCR for debate on Krishna river projects

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday invited KCR for a 'meaningful and honest discussion' on Krishna river projects on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

He said the debate could be held from January 2, provided KCR was willing to participate. Mr. Reddy said issues of such importance should be debated democratically inside the Assembly rather than through statements made outside.

Kerala schools coerced to call off Christmas events: Minister

Education Minister V. Sivankutty says Hindu far-right social media groups are targeting Christians, flags incidents of schools calling off celebrations under pressure from groups linked to the RSS

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

> The government will resist any attempt to transform schools into stifling compartments of religious segregation by any fundamentalist group
> **V. SIVANKUTTY**
> Education Minister of Kerala

Kerala's Education Minister V. Sivankutty said Christmas celebrations in schools had found themselves in the crosshairs of the Sangh Parivar.

Mr. Sivankutty flagged incidents of school managements calling off Christmas celebrations and returning collected money to students under pressure, allegedly from Hindu far-right groups owing allegiance to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Mr. Sivankutty noted that Hindu far-right social media groups targeted Christians by threatening educational institutions to desist from celebrating Christmas or face unspecified consequences.

'Action is underway'

"Several parents, students, and teachers complained to me. The government is treating the matter very seriously. Action is underway against school managements which abandoned Christmas celebrations under threats from the RSS," he said.

Mr. Sivankutty accused the RSS and its affiliates of seeking to expel the religious observances and celebrations of Christian and Muslim minorities from Kerala's cultural life.

"The RSS is seeking to intertwine State holidays with religion to create communal schisms in society. It has zeroed in on Kerala's schools, erroneously reckoning they are soft targets for their divisive purposes," he said. Mr. Sivankutty accused the RSS of attempting to replicate its "North Indian" model of "othering" minorities in Kerala by threatening to disrupt their celebrations.

Mr. Sivankutty said government and private schools operate under the Kerala Educational Rules. "The government will resist any attempt to transform schools into stifling compartments of religious segregation by any fundamentalist group," he said. "Imbibing secular and democratic values at a young age lays the ground for a humane and secular society," Mr. Sivankutty said.

In likely bid to derail train, concrete slab found on track in Kasaragod

The Hindu Bureau
KASARAGOD

A train derailment attempt was reported in Kasaragod district of Kerala on Saturday night after a concrete slab was found on the track near the Kottikulam railway station.

The slab was found around 8.30 p.m. on the track adjacent to platform number one on the southern side of the station, railway officials said.

The slab was noticed by passengers and residents, who immediately alerted the stationmaster. Railway staff rushed to the spot and removed the obstruction, averting a potential disaster.

The identity of those behind the act is yet to be ascertained. Based on a complaint filed by the Kottikulam railway station superintendent, the Bekal police have registered a case.

Opening day of fest

The incident has assumed added significance as it occurred on the opening day of the Bekal fest, prompting authorities to treat the matter with utmost seriousness.

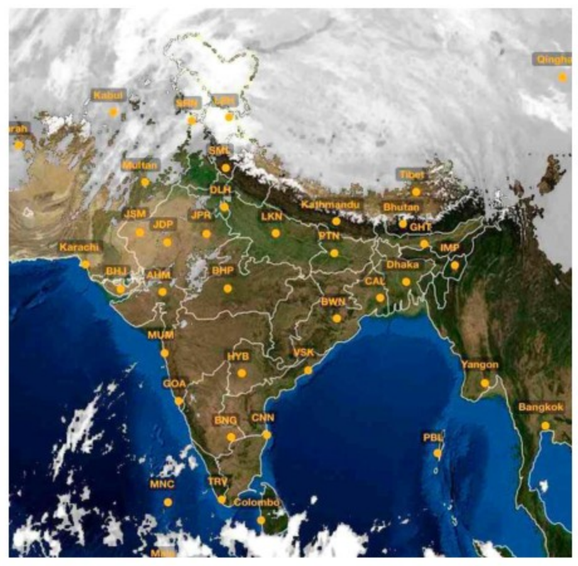
A similar derailment attempt had been reported in Kottikulam last year, when an iron rod was found on the track.

Authorities have announced that security along the stretch will be strengthened and surveillance in the area intensified.

Bekal Deputy Superintendent of Police V.V. Manoj said the investigation had been stepped up.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm accompanied with Lightning very likely at isolated places over Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh-Gilgit-Baltistan-Muzaffarabad. Cold wave conditions very likely at isolated places over North Interior Karnataka and Telangana, Bihar, Haryana, Chandigarh & Delhi, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	27.6	17.0	Kozhikode	—	33.4	21.0
Ahmedabad	—	30.5	17.0	Kurnool	—	30.0	16.7
Aizawl	—	27.3	9.8	Lucknow	—	18.9	10.1
Allahabad	—	18.6	10.5	Madurai	—	31.4	18.0
Bengaluru	—	26.6	14.7	Mangaluru	—	31.2	19.6
Bhopal	—	25.6	6.8	Mumbai	—	33.2	17.4
Bhubaneswar	—	27.6	15.1	Mysuru	—	28.0	10.6
Chandigarh	—	21.0	8.8	New Delhi	—	16.6	8.4
Chennai	—	29.3	22.2	Patna	—	16.8	12.5
Coimbatore	—	29.4	16.2	Port Blair	—	30.5	25.2
Dehradun	—	22.4	7.1	Puducherry	—	29.9	18.8
Gangtok	—	18.0	8.0	Pune	—	27.7	8.4
Goa	—	32.6	17.1	Raipur	—	26.7	7.8
Guwahati	—	26.5	13.4	Ranchi	—	23.6	7.8
Hubballi	00.0	00.0	00.0	Shillong	001.0	19.3	5.7
Hyderabad	—	28.6	12.0	Shimla	—	17.3	11.0
Imphal	—	23.6	13.6	Srinagar	000.4	6.0	4.0
Jaipur	—	26.1	12.8	Thiruvananthapuram	—	30.6	21.7
Kochi	—	29.8	20.4	Tiruchi	—	29.9	18.0
Kohima	—	18.0	6.8	Vijayawada	—	30.5	18.4
Kolkata	—	21.7	14.0	Visakhapatnam	—	28.0	19.5

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	9	67	33	100	143	
Bengaluru	4	19	26	203	226	
Chennai	6	6	27	273	273	
Delhi	16	33	98	420	354	
Hyderabad	16	10	21	147	88	
Kolkata	9	30	49	299	188	
Lucknow	49	40	10	279	167	
Mumbai	12	76	25	46	117	
Pune	20	107	71	226	164	
Visakhapatnam	11	95	49	277	259	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., New Delhi recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 377 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 11

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Heralding Sankranti

Gangireddula community members lead a decorated Gangireddu bull through the streets of Vijayawada ahead of Sankranti. G.N. RAO

Stop 'vindictive action' against Sonia and Rahul in *National Herald* case: Chidambaram

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Veteran Congress leader P. Chidambaram on Sunday urged the Union government to stop "vindictive action" against party leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in connection with the *National Herald* case, following Special judge Vishal Gogne of the Rouse Avenue Court rejecting the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) money laundering complaint.

Addressing journalists at Satyamurthy Bhavan, headquarters of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC), in Chennai, the former Union Finance Minister also termed the Centre's move to repeal the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and replace it with a new Bill as the "second killing of Mahatma Gandhi" and said his party would protest till the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill was withdrawn. [President Droupadi Murmu had on Sunday granted assent to the Bill.]

P. Chidambaram

On the *National Herald* case, Mr. Chidambaram said it was a fabricated and politically motivated charge. He alleged the ED was engaged in illegal action and no First Information Report (FIR) had been filed in the case. "There was no money transaction involved, how can anyone claim it is legal or illegal," he said. He contended that there was no information yet on whether the Union government had moved an appeal and if they proceeded with an appeal, it showed their lack of wisdom and they have not learnt their lessons. "We have strong arguments to put forth," he said.

On the VB-G RAM G Bill, Mr. Chidambaram said the name of the bill was neither in proper English nor Indian, but merely Hindi words written in English letters, which even Ministers found difficult to understand.

"The new unofficial official language of the Central government appears to be Hindi words written in English letters. People who only know Hindi cannot read the script, while English speaking people cannot understand the meaning," Mr. Chidambaram said in a post on X.

Mr. Chidambaram said while the MNREGA, a 100-days-a-year wage employment guarantee scheme, acted as an lifeline for 12 crore families, especially women, to ensure that the household did not go to bed hungry and dejected, the new Bill snatches away the benefits.

Student 'abducted, raped' in hotel room in A.P.

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a youth in a hotel room at Sattenapalli town in Andhra Pradesh's Palnadu district.

The accused befriended the victim, a native of Vijayawada on a social media platform. He, along with his friends, took the girl to the hotel at Sattenapalli, three days ago. The girl, who managed to escape from the hotel room, lodged a police complaint.

The police reportedly took the youth and three of his friends into custody. The girl would be sent for medical examination, the investigation officers said.

CPI(M) hits out at BJP for adding 'bogus voters' in Kerala's capital

Minister Sivankutty accuses BJP leaders camping in the capital to facilitate the 'electoral fraud'

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] has accused the BJP of adding "bogus voters" in droves in constituencies where it sees a winning chance in the upcoming 2026 Assembly election in Kerala.

CPI(M) State Committee member and General Education Minister V. Sivankutty told a press conference on Sunday that the BJP's efforts to "replicate the 2024 Thrissur Lok Sabha election fraud model" were centred on four Assembly constituencies in Thiruvananthapuram district: Nemom, Vattiyurkavu, Thiruvananthapuram, and Kazhakuttom.

Mr. Sivankutty alleged that the BJP had committed brazen electoral fraud by bundling and registering its supporters from other districts at rental addresses in Thrissur ahead of the Lok Sabha election, paving the way for Union Minister Suresh Gopi's victory.

"The BJP had clubbed scores of voters from other districts in rental addresses in apartment complexes and gated communities in Thrissur. The BJP had mobilised the duplicate voters, mostly its members and their families, from outlying districts where the party thought it had a zero chance of victory," he added.

Mr. Sivankutty said the BJP used its sizeable election war chest to rent houses and apartments to create temporary residential addresses for its supporters.

"The BJP is reemploying its same tactic in Thiruvananthapuram to create bogus voters in large numbers ahead of the Assembly polls," he said.

Mr. Sivankutty noted that top BJP leaders, including BJP State president Rajiv Chandrasekhar and former Union Minister V. Muraleedharan, had shifted their residences and, consequently, their voter identity to Thiruvananthapuram.

"Other BJP leaders are camping in Thiruvananthapuram to facilitate the electoral fraud," he added.

'Will move EC'

He said the CPI(M) would move the Election Commission (EC) of India against the BJP's "voter addition fraud".

He said the party would also launch a coordinated effort to detect persons who have moved from other districts and rented houses to include themselves in constituencies the BJP considers winnable.

SIT seeks help from Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre in Sabarimala gold theft case

G. Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The High Court-appointed special investigation team (SIT) has sought the expertise of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) to quantify the amount of gold in the gold-plated copper alloy moulds donated by industrialist Vijay Mallya in 1998 to encase the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple's stone carvings, sculptures flanking the sanctum sanctorum, and the doorway panels.

The VSSC's forthcoming metallurgical analysis report may provide the SIT with a scientific baseline for comparing the metallurgical nature of the original gilded panels with those returned to the temple after restoration by prime accused Unnikrishnan Potti in 2019. The SIT had received the High Court's permission to remove some of the original panels from the temple for testing at the VSSC.

Gold-clad plates being removed from the Ayyappa temple for examination.

Officials said the investigation had reached a crucial juncture following the arrest of Pankaj Bhandari, owner of Smart Creations in Chennai, last Friday. Mr. Potti had engaged the metalworks firm to restore the gilded panels in 2019.

Officials said the SIT had recovered a part of the "loot". They stressed that further investigation was under way to detect how the suspects monetised the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) property and who else profited from the crime.

Winter is behind

A less acrimonious session is an opportunity to build upon

The winter session of Parliament, which had 15 sittings, witnessed significant and controversial legislative business, along with political grandstanding by the government to mark the 150th anniversary of the national song, *Vande Mataram*. Ten Bills were introduced and eight were passed by both Houses. Notable Bills that won parliamentary approval include one repealing or amending dozens of outdated laws; another allowing 100% FDI in the insurance sector; one facilitating private sector investment in nuclear power by reducing the liability of suppliers, and, importantly, major changes to the rural employment guarantee scheme, a flagship welfare programme started by the UPA government in 2005. The titles of several Bills, which were in Hindi, caused consternation among Members of Parliament from non-Hindi regions. They pointed to constitutional provisions that require legislation to be drafted in English, with translations made available as required. The insurance Bill is titled Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha, while the rural employment guarantee Bill is called Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), or VB-G RAM G, which became an Act on December 21 with the assent of the President. In the discussion on *Vande Mataram*, Members spent over 11 hours in the Lok Sabha, with 65 participants, and nearly 13 hours in the Rajya Sabha, with 81 participants. Parliament could instead have passed a unanimous resolution commemorating the song rather than using it as yet another occasion to question the patriotic credentials of political opponents.

A heated debate on electoral reforms went on for nearly 13 hours with 62 speakers in the Lok Sabha and for nearly 11 hours with 57 speakers in the Rajya Sabha. This too was a missed opportunity for an open-minded discussion beyond party lines to address the crisis of credibility in Indian elections. The closed-minded approaches of the BJP and the Congress towards questions of election integrity are not helping India's parliamentary democracy. The Opposition sought a discussion on air pollution in Delhi, a massive public health crisis, but the government did not allow it. Bills were rushed through, and the role of parliamentary committees in shaping legislation remains limited, though Question Hour and Zero Hour were more productive. This winter session was far less acrimonious than in the recent past, a fact acknowledged by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge. As a result, Congress representatives accepted the customary invitation for tea by the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman at the end of the session. These meetings also led to pleasant exchanges between the government and the Opposition. This practice is worth continuing and building upon.

Beyond the optics

India must push its vision for a shared global order across regions

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's three-nation tour to Jordan, Ethiopia and Oman, last week, had some common and connecting threads. The visit was primarily an attempt to draw closer bilateral ties with each country in a world that is turning increasingly transactional. Beyond that, however, all three countries belong to the Global South that India seeks leadership of and each is an important development partner in their respective regions. Mr. Modi's talks with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq saw the signing of the Cooperation Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Oman-India trade has doubled to $10 billion in recent years. CEPA is expected to smooth the path for free trade agreement talks between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council. In Jordan, Mr. Modi met with King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, with the two sides launching cooperation agreements on renewable energy and water management. Mr. Modi's visit to Addis Ababa saw the launch of a strategic partnership. In the meet with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, the talks were on strengthening trade and knowledge and technology exchanges. The discussions were also key in terms of scheduling the much-delayed Africa-India summit, to be held in India. Ethiopia is not just the headquarters of the African Union, it is a new member of BRICS, and with India taking over the Chairmanship in 2026, it will be an important partner in setting out development and economic relations within both groupings.

In Amman, India and Jordan had less significant bilateral agreements but the talks were understood to be important in terms of the West Asian conflict and the Gaza Peace proposal. The tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbours have now imperilled the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor which is meant to traverse through Jordan. The Joint Statement in Amman had no mention of the corridor. Mr. Modi's presence in Jordan and a reiteration of India's traditional support for the Palestinian cause at a time when External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was in Israel to meet Netanyahu government leaders was possibly meant to reassure the Arab leadership and those in the Global South strongly opposed to Israel's actions, that India's principled stand has not changed. The joint statement with Oman underlined the need for a resolution in Gaza including the establishment of a "sovereign and independent Palestinian state". However, unless that message is reiterated with India's Israeli interlocutors, especially Prime Minister Netanyahu who is expected to visit India in the new year, the import of visits such as the one by Mr. Modi would fail to build on the optics of bonhomie for a shared vision of the global order.

The bulldozed demolition of MGNREGA

Sonia Gandhi

is Chairperson, Congress Parliamentary Party

The historic Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) became a reality on September 5, 2005, during the first tenure of Dr. Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister. MGNREGA was a rights-based legislation inspired by Article 41 of the Constitution of India, which calls upon the Government to secure citizens' right to work. It was developed and given shape through an extensive process of public consultations that lasted for almost 13 months. Both Houses of Parliament passed the Bill. both enthusiastically and unanimously.

Over the past few days, the Narendra Modi government worked to bulldoze MGNREGA's abolition without any discussion, consultation, or respect for parliamentary processes or Centre-State relations. The removal of the Mahatma's name was only the tip of the iceberg. The very structure of MGNREGA, so integral to its impact, has been annihilated. It must be recalled that it has been the world's largest social security initiative and one that has also been the most intensively studied and evaluated. All these studies have emphasised its transformative effects on the weakest sections of our society.

A demolition in stages

Right from its conception, MGNREGA was envisioned as more than a mere scheme – as guaranteed employment based on actual demand from rural families in distress. The Modi government has simply annihilated the very idea of a legal guarantee in its new law, which is nothing but a set of bureaucratic provisions.

MGNREGA enacted the right to work in all rural India. The Modi government's new Bill has restricted the ambit of the scheme to rural areas as notified by the Union at its discretion.

Whereas earlier, the central allocation was meant to be uncapped, there is now a pre-determined budgetary allocation that caps the days of employment provided in each State. The number of workdays provided are, therefore, left to the Union Government's priorities rather than the people's needs.

The all-year guarantee of employment has been finished off. State governments have been asked to identify 60 days during peak agricultural season where no work shall be undertaken. One of the greatest impacts of MGNREGA was to increase the bargaining power of the landless poor in rural India, which has elevated agricultural wages. This bargaining power will definitely be eroded under the new law. The Modi government is attempting to suppress wage growth and that too at a time when the proportion of employment in agriculture has risen for the first time since Independence, contrary to what should have been the case.

> The annihilation of this powerful social security intervention will have catastrophic consequences for crores of people across rural India

MGNREGA exempted State governments from most of the financial burden, since the cost-sharing ratio was 90:10, borne by the Union government. This incentivised the State government to implement the scheme in earnest, in response to demand rather than its own fiscal constraints. Now, the new cost-sharing ratio is 60:40. Worse, any expense incurred in excess of the Union government's pre-determined allocation will now have to be borne entirely by the States. Effectively, by transferring a significant portion of the expense onto the States, the Modi government is discouraging States from providing work under the scheme. The finances of States, already under severe stress and strain, will be further devastated.

Aside from demolishing the demand-based nature of the programme, the Modi government has ended the decentralised nature of the scheme. In accordance with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, MGNREGA provided for the Gram Sabha to undertake the planning of works as well as be the principal implementation authority of the scheme. This constitutional vision of local self-governance will be replaced by a top-down PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP) which will inevitably reflect the Union government's priorities rather than local needs. This is centralisation with a vengeance.

The Modi government is resorting to fraudulent claims that it has enhanced the employment guarantee from 100 days (under MGNREGA) to 125 days. For all the reasons outlined above, that will certainly not be the case. Indeed, the real nature of the Modi government's intentions can be understood from its decade-long track record of throttling MGNREGA. It began with the Prime Minister's (in)famous mocking of the scheme on the floor of the House and proceeded apace through a 'death by a thousand cuts' strategy – through, for instance, stagnant budgets, the use of disenfranchising technology and delayed payments to workers.

The impact of its loss

For the last 20 years, MGNREGA has been the most powerful social security intervention at the disposal of the government. It has secured better wages for crores of citizens, stemmed seasonal distress migration, and hugely empowered gram panchayats. The social audits conducted by the gram sabhas brought about a new culture of accountability and transparency. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the whole economy was severely dislocated, MGNREGA was one of two avenues through which the government was able to reach the poor and most vulnerable sections of society – the other being the National Food Security Act, 2013. Outside of COVID-19, the ever-high demand for work under this scheme only proves its continued necessity for ensuring rural livelihoods. Its demolition will have catastrophic consequences for crores of people across rural India.

In cross hairs

The demolition of the right to work must not be seen in isolation but as part of the long assault by the ruling establishment on the Constitution and its right-based vision for the country. The most fundamental right to vote is under unprecedented assault. The Right to Information has been desecrated with legislative changes that weaken the autonomy of Information Commissioners, and by wholesale exemptions from the Act for ill-defined 'personal information' data. The Right to Education has been undermined by a National Education Policy 2020, which has legitimised the shut down of about one lakh primary schools around the country. The Forest Rights Act, 2006, was markedly weakened by the Forest (Conservation) Rules (2022) which removed the gram sabha from any role in permitting the diversion of forest land. The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 has been significantly diluted. The National Green Tribunal set up in October 2010 following the passage of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 has been emasculated. Through the three black farm laws, the government attempted to deny farmers the right to a minimum support price. The National Food Security Act, 2013, may very well be next on the chopping block.

MGNREGA realised the Mahatma's vision of Sarvodaya ('welfare of all') and enacted the constitutional right to work. Its death is our collective moral failure – one that will have financial and human consequences for crores of India's working peoples for years to come. It is imperative, now more than ever, to unite and safeguard the rights that protect us all.

Unlocking the potential of India-Africa economic ties

Amal Krishnan

is Assistant Professor at Christ University, Bengaluru

Badri Narayanan

is Fellow, NITI Aayog

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Namibia and Ghana, as part of a five-nation tour (including Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina and Brazil) in July 2025, focused the spotlight again on India-Africa economic relations – just as his recent visit to Ethiopia (December 16-17, 2025) did. The recent decade has witnessed a fresh momentum in India's relations with various African countries. A testament to this is the entry of the African Union as a full-time member of the G-20 during India's presidency term in 2023. India and Africa share a long history of cultural affinity and political solidarity, but their relationship has increasingly been shaped by economics in recent decades.

Uncertainties in western markets

In FY24, India's exports to the United States and the European Union constituted around 40% of its total exports. Given the rising unpredictability of these markets and the threat of a potential slowdown, it is essential that India looks to other markets, particularly African economies.

India is Africa's fourth-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching nearly $100 billion. In FY24, India exported goods worth $38.17 billion to African countries – the key destinations included Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania. Petroleum products, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, rice and textiles were some of the major goods exported. In 2024, Africa's imports from India were around 6% of its total imports. To put this in perspective, in addition to being one of the largest investors, China is also Africa's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade exceeding $200 billion. Around 21% of imports to Africa in 2024 came from China. Interestingly around 33% of imports from China fell under the HSN 84 and 85 product categories, demonstrating China's industrial prowess. These product categories comprise machinery, boilers, electrical machinery, and semiconductor devices.

Recognising the need to catch up, India has already set a target of doubling its trade with Africa by 2030. Here is a five-point strategy that may enable India to fulfil its target.

> India's engagement with the continent must move towards developing long-term and sustainable partnerships

The first strategic pillar should focus on removing trade barriers and engaging in negotiations for preferential trade agreements and comprehensive economic partnership agreements with regional economic communities and the major African economies.

The second pillar should aim to move from low-value commodity exports to two-way value-added and cross-border joint venture manufacturing. Currently, Indian firms lag in utilising the incentives offered by multiple African governments to enable firms to set up manufacturing units. For Indian enterprises, setting up manufacturing facilities across Africa presents a strategic dual advantage. It enables them to maintain preferential access to the U.S. market through favourable tariff regimes, while simultaneously capitalising on Africa's growing consumer base and industrial demand. Moving beyond petroleum and traditional exports is critical in transitioning to a new phase of India's ties with African economies. Deepening engagement with African regional groupings such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can open greater opportunities for Indian exporters.

An opportunity for MSMEs

The third pillar must prioritise the scaling-up of the Lines of Credit and improve accessibility to trade finance. The African market offers a great opportunity for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) segment, unlike the European and American markets where MSMEs find it difficult to gain a foothold. There is a considerable lack of policy attention in enabling MSMEs to gain access to the African markets.

Ensuring easy access to trade finance is critical in achieving a sustainable trade relationship with the continent. Other measures may include adopting trade in local currencies, and forming a joint insurance pool to cover political and commercial risks for medium-term projects which may reduce the perceived risk for small and medium enterprises and banks.

The fourth strategic pillar should focus on lowering freight and logistics costs by investing in port modernisation, hinterland connectivity and in developing India-Africa maritime corridors.

The final strategic pillar involves the scaling up of services, digital trade, and people-to-people links. It is essential that India leverages its strength in Information Technology, health care, professional services and skill development to boost services exports and stimulate goods trade. Services enable high-value exports and facilitate greater two-way trade. Current policy measures fall short in enabling services trade with African economies. There needs to be a considerable improvement in this regard.

A role for the Indian public sector

Strengthening investments by Indian firms in African manufacturing, agro-processing, infrastructure, renewable energy and critical and emerging technologies may lend further strength to India's relations with African economies. Currently, India's investments in Africa are inflated by investments in Mauritius which are often done with an intent to evade taxes. Multiple factors, including bureaucratic hurdles, political instability and financing costs act as barriers for Indian firms to invest in Africa. Indian firms, particularly the public sector units must take the lead in investing in the African continent, particularly in mining and mineral exploration.

Ultimately, India's engagement with Africa must go beyond transactional trade and move towards building long-term, sustainable partnerships. As global supply chains undergo restructuring and the world shifts towards a multipolar economic order, Africa will remain central to India's aspirations of becoming a global economic power. The time is ripe for India to recalibrate, innovate, and deepen its economic footprint across the African continent.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Citizens, toxic air

Politicians anywhere jettison the people once voted to office. But the fate of citizens in the capital city is the worst that it can be. During the AAP regime they spent months choked by toxic air. The BJP made merry, eroding its opponent's image while doing nothing constructive to ameliorate the plight of Delhi's populace. Political outfits are too busy to think of the people and smug in scoring political brownie points.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

Mowed down

The loss of a herd of elephants after the Mizoram-New Delhi Rajdhani Express hit the seven animals, including a calf that was a few days old (Front page, December 21), underscores how wildlife deaths continue to play out across several States. Such incidents point to the clash between development and the pressures on fragile wildlife habitats. Earlier accidents prompted ad hoc measures such as speed restrictions and patrols, yet enforcement remains uneven. A balanced response must blend technology with local knowledge. There must be thermal sensors, underpasses at known transit points, and strict speed limits through sensitive zones.

Above all, mapping of elephant paths and better coordination between rail authorities and wildlife experts would save the lives of precious wild animals.

A. Myilsami,
Coimbatore

The accident is a setback to the conservation of elephants. Though the Indian Railways claim to have adopted safety measures, these accidents seem to continue. There are a number of devices that can be used to alert elephants. AI-generated ear piercing sounds can be played at elephant crossings with the active supervision of railway personnel and wildlife experts.

Dr. V. Purushothaman,
Chennai

Sreenivasan

The passing of Malayalam actor-director Sreenivasan brings to an end a glorious chapter in Malayalam cinema.

He brought the life of the common Malayali onto the screen — their daily struggles, small joys and tears, which every person could relate to. In self-deprecating roles he brought out the problems people have with bandhs, load shedding and unions. His stories and movies were contemporary then and are still relevant today. Some of the epic dialogues in Malayalam cinema will always be owned by him.

Subash Balakrishnan,
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

He was a vibrant actor, scenarist and director. As a storyteller, Sreenivasan addressed the issues of unemployment, power politics and corruption, and gave expression to the innermost human feelings. A master craftsman who knew the pulse of people, Sreenivasan will remain to be an inspiring force for cinema aspirants.

J. Radhakrishna Kurup,
Ettumanoor, Kottayam, Kerala

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Lessons from China on tackling pollution

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China and India have long grappled with severe air pollution. Yet their trajectories over the past decade have diverged sharply. Once a global symbol of smog, Beijing managed to cut its annual PM2.5 levels by more than 50% between 2013 and 2021, while Delhi continues to rank among the world's most polluted cities. How is Beijing breathing easier?

Clean-air transformation

Beijing's transformation was neither accidental nor incremental. It stemmed from a multifaceted approach enabled by two major policy drives: the Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan and the Blue Sky Protection Campaign. These measures focussed on sweeping, top-down interventions across energy, transport, and industry. Beijing's strategy was anchored in three features: coherent policy, strict enforcement, and regional coordination. The government expanded electric mobility, shut down or relocated hundreds of polluting industries, replaced thousands of coal-fired boilers with natural gas, imposed stringent China VI vehicular emission standards, built one of the world's densest PM2.5 real-time air quality monitoring systems, and imposed substantial penalties for non-compliance. Most importantly, Beijing didn't act alone. Its coordination with the neighbouring Tianjin-Hebei provinces through a unified 'airshed' strategy ensured regulation of transboundary air pollution. The turnaround was remarkable – PM2.5 levels dropped from the average 102 $\mu g/m^3$ in 2013 to 31 $\mu g/m^3$ in 2024.

India does not lack environmental laws, but from the shortage of coherence in implementing them. A strong statutory framework – the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981, the Environment Protection Act, 1986, and rules governing waste, construction, and emissions – exists alongside courts, tribunals, and pollution-control boards. Indirectly, various laws such as the Factories Act, 1948 and the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 also shape air-quality outcomes. Yet regulatory fragmentation undermines their impact. Over the years, India has rolled out many initiatives: the National Clean Air Programme, the Graded Response Action Plan, odd-even rationing, construction bans, dust-control rules, crop-residue measures, work-from-home advisories, and Delhi's Air Pollution Mitigation Plan 2025. The Centre has also established the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM). These interventions, however, are largely reactive and activated during pollution peaks rather than embedded in long-term planning; and agencies function in silos.

The core difference between the two approaches lies in governance, enforcement, and coordination. China's Environmental Vertical Reform created a clear hierarchy for realising local governments' environmental protection responsibilities. This top-down structure ensured uniform actions, strict enforcement, and rapid implementation. Delhi, however, operates within a fragmented governance system involving the Union government, the Delhi government, pollution control boards, and multiple municipal bodies. As a result, decision-making becomes slower, enforcement weaker, and accountability more diffused. Beijing's regulatory agencies also possess sweeping authority and substantial resources. On the other hand, India's pollution control boards remain chronically understaffed and underfunded. Also, Beijing modelled inter-provincial alignment through the airshed strategy whereas the CAQM's directives to address stubble burning from adjoining States remain unauthoritative.

China has made large sustained investments in clean energy, electric mobility, and industrial relocation. Delhi's own industrial relocation attempts, such as the Bawana project, have faltered due to inadequate infrastructure and poor service delivery. Even 'sustainable' alternatives such as waste-to-energy plants have failed to meet air-quality norms. Delhi's pollution load is further intensified by industrial and vehicular emissions, corrupted Pollution Under Control (PUC) checks, construction dust, open waste burning, and meteorological inversions that trap winter pollutants. Public transport expansion has lagged behind the city's growth. Odd-even rationing has shown negligible long-term impact. Behavioural change too, has been slower in India.

What India can borrow

India need not emulate China's political system to achieve a turnaround, but it can draw on the principles that made China's progress possible. First, governance must shift from episodic responses to a long-term sustained, mission-oriented strategy and treat air pollution as a national public health emergency. Second, India must accelerate its transition to clean energy. Beijing's move away from coal drove major PM2.5 reductions; Delhi similarly needs to expand and adopt energy-efficient standards suitable for all sectors. Third, transport reforms must be enforced, not merely announced. BS-VI norms require credible PUC systems, modern testing centres, a robust vehicle-scrappage policy, and congestion management. Expanding EV charging infrastructure, incentivising electric mobility, and dramatically strengthening public transport are essential. Fourth, industrial policy must shift from relocation on paper to functional industrial zones with full utilities, transport access, and real-time emissions monitoring. Finally, air pollution must be governed as a regional problem. A Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei style airshed model should guide Delhi-NCR.

India need not emulate China's political system to achieve a turnaround, but it can draw on the principles that made China's progress possible

A yatra to gain a foothold in Andhra

The BJP is propagating the good governance of Vajpayee and Modi

STATE OF PLAY

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The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is eyeing a foothold in Andhra Pradesh through its Atal Modi Suparipalana Yatra, which will cover the entire State with the objective of propagating the "good governance" of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. As the party shares power in the State with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Jana Sena Party (JSP), it remains focused on highlighting the achievements of the BJP at the Centre.

Andhra Pradesh has not been a traditional hunting ground for the saffron party, which is trying to make inroads into south India. While the BJP has grown from the grassroots level in neighbouring Telangana, winning a substantial number of MP, MLA, and MLC seats, and even making gains in the ongoing panchayat elections compared to previous years, its performance in Andhra Pradesh can be termed one of "mixed fortune" across different phases.

In the 2014 elections, the first after the formation of Andhra Pradesh, the BJP fought in alliance with the TDP, with outside support from the JSP, and bagged two Lok Sabha seats and four Assembly seats, with a vote share of 7.22% in the Lok Sabha and 4.13% in the Assembly.

All three parties contested the 2019 elections independently. The BJP failed to secure representation in either the State Assembly or the Lok Sabha. Its vote share fell to 0.84% in the Assembly elections and 0.98% in the parliamentary elections.

The party gained considerably in the 2024 elections. Its performance can be attributed to the coalition with the TDP and JSP, which went hammer and tongs against the then Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government, as well as to the charisma of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The BJP contested 10 Assembly seats and won eight, while it secured three Lok Sabha seats out of the six it contested. Its vote share increased to 11.28% in the Lok Sabha elections and 2.83% in the Assembly elections, from less than 1% in the previous polls.

Subsequently, there was a change of guard in the State party unit, with senior leader and former MLC P.V.N. Madhav taking the reins from Rajamahendravaram MP Daggubati Purandeswari. A section of party leaders believed that the BJP needed to grow on its own strength, starting from the grassroots level.

With a substantial number of MLAs, and Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members, as well as representation in the Union Cabinet from all the three regions of the State, the party leadership wants to take up programmes to spread the message of development under the NDA at both the national and State levels. However, as the BJP is part of the State government – with Satya Kumar Yadav holding the Health and Family Welfare portfolio – it cannot openly raise its voice against any failures of the State government to connect with the people, party leaders said.

The party's national leadership has reportedly made it clear that it must go hand in hand with the TDP, considering the support the latter is extending to the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre. With 16 Lok Sabha seats, the TDP is the second-largest party in the NDA. As the NDA has just 293 MPs, barely above the required 272 in the 543-member Lok Sabha, the BJP is heavily reliant on the TDP and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United), and does not want to take any step that could endanger the coalition.

The party has chalked out the Atal Modi Suparipalana Yatra, which will cover the entire State in two phases between December 11 and 25, during which statues of Atal Bihari Vajpayee are being unveiled at various places. The yatra, which began at Dharmavaram in Sri Sathya Sai district, will culminate in Amaravati, where a public meeting is planned with the participation of top leaders from the BJP, TDP, and JSP.

The Chief Ministers of BJP-ruled States, Union Ministers, and other leaders have been asked to participate in daily meetings, with a specific focus on the development achieved by the State during the Vajpayee and Modi governments. The TDP has also been made a partner in the programme, with its leaders and State Cabinet Ministers participating across districts.

BJP leaders maintained that involving the coalition partner in the yatra was aimed at strengthening ties with the TDP, as its support is crucial for the NDA government at the Centre.

Tamil Nadu SIR: Unusual patterns in deleted electors list

Several areas show abnormal deletions in categories such as gender and for reasons such as deaths

DATA POINT

Areena Arora
Nitika Francis
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An analysis of the Chief Electoral Officer, Tamil Nadu's polling station-level list of over 97 lakh deleted electors in Tamil Nadu reveals several anomalies that require closer examination. The analysis reveals eight distinct categories of anomalies.

The State has provided data on deleted electors for each Assembly Constituency at the polling station-level. In total, data from 75,018 polling stations were analysed. A polling station is different from a polling centre. A centre can have multiple polling stations. In the lists provided below, the names of the polling stations, the name of the Assembly constituency, and the name of the district are mentioned in that order. Here are some of our key findings:

- 14 stations show unusually high proportions of young deaths
- 35 stations show high gender bias in deletions
- 8,613 stations have abnormally high deletion rates
- 727 stations report excessive deaths
- 3,904 polling stations show high death proportions
- 495 polling stations show 100% death-based deletions
- 6,139 parts have high numbers of "absent" voters
- 172 parts show suspicious patterns of "permanently shifted" women

Young deaths

Pattern: Polling stations where more than 50 people are recorded as deceased, with at least half being under 50 years of age. The data reveals 14 polling stations across the State where death patterns defy demographic norms. In typical populations, deaths are heavily skewed towards older age groups, making high proportions of young deaths statistically anomalous.

Top five stations:

1. Government Model Higher Secondary School, Madavaram, Thiruvallur: 58 total deaths, 49 under the age of 50 (84%)
2. Thooyavalanar Girls Higher Secondary School, Mannargudi, Thiruvarur: 111 total deaths, 65 under the age of 50 (58%)
3. Tambaram Corporation Primary School, Pallavaram, Chengalpattu: 51 total deaths, 29 under the age of 50 (56%)
4. Panchayat Union Middle School, Thiruvidaimarudur, Thanjavur: 131 total deaths, 74 under the age of 50 (56%)
5. Panchayat Union Primary School, Nanguneri, Tirunelveli: 130 total deaths, 73 under the age of 50 (56%)

High gender bias in deletions

Pattern: Polling stations where at least 50 women were deleted, with women comprising 75% or more of all deletions. Data showed there are 35 such polling stations.

Top five stations:

1. St. Susai Primary School, Tiruchendur, Thoothukudi : 110 total deletions, 95women (86%)
2. Panchayat Union Primary School, Kilvelur, Nagapattinam: 74 total deletions, 61 women (82%)
3. Panchayat Union Primary School, Poompuhar, Mayiladuthurai : 66 total deletions, 54 women (82%)
4. Sri Vivekananda's Aided Initiation, Thiruvarur, Thiruvarur: 73 total deletions, 59 women (81%)
5. Uratchi Union Primary School, Orathanadu, Thanjavur : 62 total deletions, 50 women (81%)

Abnormally high deletion rates

Pattern: Polling stations with more than 260 deletions (double the average number of deletions in one polling station in Tamil Nadu), far exceeding typical rates. In 8,613 stations, more than 260 electors were deleted, representing the massive scale of deletions.

Top five stations:

1. NLC Higher Secondary School, Bhuvanagiri, Cuddalore: 861 total deletions
2. C.S.I. Monahan Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni, Chennai : 835 total deletions
3. Jaigopal Garodia Vivekananda Vidyalaya, Anna Nagar, Chennai: 817 total deletions
4. Dwarakadas Govardhandas Vaishnava College, Anna Nagar, Chennai: 814 total deletions
5. Children's Paradise School, Velachery, Chennai: 783 total deletions

Excessive death reports

Pattern: Polling stations where more than 108 deaths – three times the average number of deletions due to deaths in one station in Tamil Nadu – have been reported. This pattern is observed in 727 stations.

Top five stations:

1. Panchayat Union Primary School, Avanashi, Tiruppur: 216 deaths
2. O.O. Middle School, Dharapuram, Tiruppur: 207 deaths
3. Government High School, Madathukulam, Tiruppur: 205 deaths
4. Government Kallar Higher Secondary School, Usilampatti, Madurai: 196 deaths
5. O.O.N. Primary School, Dharapuram, Tiruppur: 194 deaths

High death proportions

Pattern: These are stations where at least 75% of deletions are attributed to deaths. In 3,904 stations, deletions due to death exceeded typical demographic change patterns.

Top five stations:

1. Govt Primary school, Papanasam, Thanjavur (99.2% electors deletions attributed to deaths)
2. Panchayat Union Primary School, Thiruvidaimardur, Thanjavur (99.2% electors deletions attributed to deaths)
3. Thiruvalluvar aided primary school, Thiruvaiyaru, Thanjavur (99% electors deletions attributed to deaths)
4. Govt High school, Ramanathapuram, Ramanathapuram: (98.9% electors deletions attributed to deaths)
5. St. Arulappar higher secondary school, Tenkasi, Tenkasi: 98.9% electors deletions attributed to deaths

All deletions due to death

Pattern: In several polling stations, all deletions have been attributed to deaths. This pattern is observed in 495 stations across 103 Assembly seats.

Top five stations:

1. Panchayat Union Middle School, Thirumangalam, Madurai: 142 electors deleted. The reasons for all were attributed to deaths
2. Panchayat Union Middle School, Sivaganga, Sivaganga: 134 electors deleted.
3. Panchayat Union Middle School, Thiruvidaimarudur, Thanjavur: 131 electors deleted.
4. Panchayat Union Primary School, Papanasam, Thanjavur: 131 electors deleted.
5. Integrated Child Development Center, Tirunelveli, Tirunelveli: 119 electors deleted.

Mass "absent" classifications

Pattern: Across the list of deleted electors, on average 37 per station are deleted for not being present at the given residence. There are 6,139 polling stations where more than 74 voters (double the average) were deleted as they were absent.

Top five stations:

1. Prince Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Shozhinganallur, Chengalpattu: 549 electors not residing.
2. N.S.N. Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Pallavaram, Chengalpattu: 505 electors not residing.
3. Government Higher Secondary School, Maduravoyal, Thiruvallur: 503 electors not residing.
4. Sunbeam Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Shozhinganallur, Chengalpattu: 478 electors not residing.
5. Government Higher Secondary School, Alandur, Kancheepuram: 450 electors not residing.

Polling stations with an unusually high number of women shifted

Pattern: These are the polling stations where the number of those deleted because they had permanently shifted is higher than average. Of these stations, in 172 women make up at least 75% of those deleted.

Select stations:

1. Walker Higher Secondary School, Nanguneri, Tirunelveli: 218 shifted electors, 172 are women (78.8%)
2. Union Primary School, Shozhinganallur, Chengalpattu: 192 shifted electors, 151 are women (78.6%).
3. Panchayat Union Primary School, Poompuhar, Mayiladuthurai: 172 shifted electors, 131 are women (76.1%)
4. Chennai primary school, Thiruvottriyur, Thiruvallur: 132 shifted electors, 101 are women (76.5%).
5. Panchayat Middle School, Poonamallee, Thiruvallur: 125 shifted electors, 96 women (76.8%).

The PDFs of each polling station was downloaded from the TN Election Commission website and then translated to look at elector-level data. For analysis this data was then aggregated and queried

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 22, 1975

10 OPEC Ministers held hostage

Vienna, Dec. 21: A group of guerillas stormed the headquarters of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries here to-day, sprayed the building with machine-gun fire and seized 60 to 70 hostages – including senior Ministers from 9 or 10 OPEC member-nations.

Among those held were Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, influential Oil Minister of Saudi Arabia and Mr. Jamshid Amouzegar, Iranian Interior Minister.

Senior Indonesian officials, led by Dr. Elrich Sanger, were known to be inside the offices.

Two Austrian detectives and another man were shot dead as the guerillas broke into the meeting of the OPEC Ministers.

The Police said the guerillas had demanded an aircraft to fly them and their hostages to an unknown destination. It was assumed they planned to take the OPEC Ministers with them.

Oil or other Ministers from Algeria, Ecuador, Gabon, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria and Venezuela were also known to be inside the building.

OPEC sources said it was unclear whether the Kuwait Oil Minister, Mr. Abdul Muttaleb al-Kazemi, was also being held.

According to the Police one of the gunmen – thought to be a South American – was shot in the stomach shortly after the raid started and was in hospital undergoing a serious operation. The guerillas threatened to blow up the building if the man was not brought back to the OPEC offices – "dead or alive" – by 7 a.m. local time (06-00 GMT) to-morrow.)

The guerillas had planted explosives and hand grenades inside the offices and threatened to blow up the building unless their demands were met by to-morrow morning. They also threatened to detonate their explosives if they were approached by armed forces.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 22, 1925

Betting to be legalised?

Leafield (Oxford) Mid. Dec. 21: The Chancellor of the Exchequer will receive a deputation on betting tomorrow. The deputation will ask that betting be taxed and legalised.

"The Manchester Guardian" says there is reason to believe that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will give a negative, but sympathetic, refusal on the grounds of impracticability of collecting such taxation.

From Page One

'Keeping close watch on Bangladesh events'

This follows "security incidents" near IVACs in Rajshahi, Chittagong, Khulna, and Dhaka. "It's difficult to operate our visa facilities in Bangladesh when people are unable to step out because of the prevailing security situation," said an official explaining that Indian missions have been subjected to stone-throwing and frequent targeting by mobs in the past several days.

Responding to Bangladesh's concerns about the incident outside their mission in Delhi, Mr. Jaiswal said, "The police stationed at the spot dispersed the group after a few minutes. Visual evidence of these events is available publicly for all to see ... India is committed to ensure the safety of foreign missions/Posts in its territory in accordance with the Vienna convention."

Responding to the Indian remarks, Foreign Affairs Adviser of the interim government of Bangladesh Touhid Hossein said, "One Bangladeshi citizen was brutally murdered. This incident should not be mixed with the minorities. The person who was killed was a Bangladeshi citizen and we took action on this without any delay and several individuals have been arrested in this case."

"Bangladesh is not the only country where such incidents take place. They take place in all countries of our region and every country should take appropriate action to deal with such cases and Bangladesh has already taken steps," Mr. Hossein said, addressing the media at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka. Mr. Hossein's opinions were further amplified by a Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement, which said, "The intercommunal situation in Bangladesh is better than in many other parts in South Asia."

Railways to hike fare from December 26

"Railways has expanded its network and operations significantly over the last decade. To cater to a higher level of operations and to improve safety, it is increasing its manpower. Consequently, manpower cost has increased to ₹1,15,000 crore. Pension cost has increased to ₹60,000 crore. Total cost of operations has increased to ₹2,63,000 crore in 2024-25. To meet this higher cost of manpower, railways are focusing on higher cargo loading and a small amount of passenger fare rationalisation," the note said.

U.P. man attacked for allegedly carrying beef

"After the State government recently sought to withdraw the case against the accused in the lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq in Dadri in 2015, communal groups have been emboldened. The Aligarh case highlights the failure of law and order in the State. Groups backed by the ruling regime are running extortion rackets under the garb of cow vigilantism. Innocent people from the Muslim community are continuously attacked for no fault of their own and an atmosphere of terror is being created against minorities through organised gangs. We demand strictest possible action against the accused," Shahnawaz Alam, Congress national secretary, said.

The Samajwadi Party (SP) said fringe Hindutva elements were vitiating communal harmony of society, with minority communities at the receiving end of their attacks. "They believe minorities are easy targets as government response is discriminatory," said Ameeque Jamei, the SP spokesperson.

West Bengal Police warn against misleading remarks

The police say malicious efforts are being made to draw parallels between the recent murder of a man in Bangladesh and the lynching of a father-son duo in Murshidabad in the State in April

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

> Such comparisons are highly inciteful, factually misleading, and intended to disturb public order. Thirteen accused persons were promptly arrested in the Murshidabad case, and a strong chargesheet was filed. Judgment in the case is expected very soon
>
> WEST BENGAL POLICE

The West Bengal Police on Saturday denounced "disingenuous" attempts to draw a parallel between the recent murder of a young man, Dipu Chandra Das, in Bangladesh and the lynching of a father-son duo in Murshidabad in April.

In a social media post, the police said that "malicious efforts are being made from certain quarters to draw parallels between the recent murder of Dipu Chandra Das in Bangladesh and the tragic death of the father-son duo of Haragobindo and Chandan Das in Murshidabad about eight months back".

"Such comparisons are highly inciteful, factually misleading, and intended to disturb public order. Thirteen accused persons were promptly arrested in the Murshidabad case, and a strong chargesheet was filed. Judgment in the case is expected very soon," the police said.

The statement comes after several BJP leaders took to social media, in the wake of the Bangladesh incident, to refer to the communal clashes in Murshidabad in April 2025 when Haragobindo Das and Chandan Das were lynched to death.

'Bid to communalise'

"Drawing parallels with the events in Bangladesh is nothing but a disingenuous attempt to spread communal mistrust where the law is already taking its course," the police said, adding that they were monitoring handles spreading provocative misinformation and legal action will be initiated against those attempting to communalise criminal incidents.

Reacting to the police statement, BJP leader Amit Malviya, in a social media, post wrote, "Mamata Banerjee must stop hiding behind the West Bengal police. The brutal murder of Haragobindo Das and his son, Chandan Das, in Murshidabad, West Bengal, who were dragged from their home and killed by Muslim radicals, is not an isolated instance of the targeted killing of Hindus."

Communal violence had erupted in Murshidabad in April this year during a protest against the Waqf (Amendment) Bill. Three people were killed and hundreds were rendered homeless in the violence.

Meanwhile, Bharatpur MLA Humayun Kabir, who was suspended by the Trinamool Congress after he announced plans to construct Babri Masjid in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, on Sunday announced his plans to launch a new political party on Monday.

Announcement of party

Posters have come up in Beldanga stating that Mr. Kabir will announce a new party at Khagrupara More at Beldanga on December 22. Mr. Kabir said that his party would provide a platform to the marginalised people of the State. Earlier, before announcing the name of his party, the MLA had said that he was willing to ally with the CPI(M), the Congress, and the Indian Secular Front (ISF).

"I am inviting those who are against Mamata Banerjee and the BJP to join hands. I am ready to share seats. But if someone thinks he is bigger than everyone, then I will fight alone. If necessary, I will contest all the seats in West Bengal," Mr. Kabir said on Sunday. He was suspended by the Trinamool Congress on December 4, and on December 11, he laid the foundation stone for Babri Masjid.

Centre rejects mining push charge behind Aravalli definition

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

It said a SC-approved framework provides for stronger protection of the mountain system

Asserting that 90% of the Aravalli region will remain "protected", the Centre on Sunday rejected claims that the new definition of the Aravalli range will allow large-scale mining and cited a Supreme Court-ordered freeze on new mining leases in the region.

It said a Supreme Court-approved framework provides for stronger protection of the mountain system and places a freeze on new mining leases until a comprehensive management plan is finalised.

'Stop spreading lies'

Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said that the court -approved definition will bring more than 90% per cent of the Aravalli region under "protected area." Replying to queries from mediapersons, Mr. Yadav also emphasised that "no relaxation has been granted" with regard to the protection of the Aravalli region and claimed "lies" have been spread on the issue.

"Stop spreading misinformation!" he said in a post on X, amid allegations by the Congress and others that the step will destroy the Aravallis.

"In the total area of 1.44 lakh square kilometres of the Aravalli, mining eligibility can only be in 0.19 per cent of the area. The rest of the entire Aravalli is preserved and protected," said Mr. Yadav.

The Supreme Court, on November 20, 2025, accepted the recommendations of a committee under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change on the definition of Aravalli Hills and Ranges.

According to the new definition, "Aravalli Hill is any landform in designated Aravalli districts with an elevation of 100 metres or more above its local relief" and an "Aravalli Range is a collection of two or more such hills within 500 metres of each other".

The government, however, asserted that it is "incorrect to conclude" that all landforms below 100 metres are open for mining.

Snowfall ends prolonged dry spell, lifts hope for winter tourism in the Kashmir Valley

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

A much-awaited spell of snowfall at most popular tourist sites in the Kashmir Valley on Sunday brought cheer and joy to tourists as well as stakeholders in the tourism sector. The wet weather also ended a prolonged and alarming dry spell in Kashmir.

The tourism 'golden triangle' of Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Sonamarg recorded approximately two to five inches of snowfall throughout Sunday. Tourists were mesmerised by a thick, white blanket of snow, setting the stage for Christmas and New Year celebrations, and winter sports in the Valley.

The beautification of St. Mary's Church in Gulmarg, built in 1902, was under way, officials said. Hundreds of tourists arrive every year for Christmas and New Year celebrations at Gulmarg.

Snow cascade: The higher reaches of Kashmir witnessed snowfall as *Chillai Kalan* (big cold), the 40-day harshest winter period, began on Sunday. IMRAN NISSAR

The prolonged dry spell had threatened skiing at Gulmarg, a distinction earned for its Alps-like powder snow. "In the past few years, the number of ski days at the winter destination of Gulmarg has fallen because of scant snowfall. However, the fresh snow will allow ski enthusiasts from India and abroad to pick up the high-adrenaline sport once again," Khawar Javaid, a skier, said.

The Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering in Gulmarg, has registered several batches of skiers from across the country this winter. Officials in Gulmarg expected an increase in footfalls of foreign tourists after snowfall.

Jalaal Jeelani, an adventure sports enthusiast, said "Winter is the backbone of adventure tourism and sustainable livelihoods. Snow is the fuel that keeps hotels alive, guides and ponymen employed, the gondola rides buzzing, and local markets breathing through the harsh months".

The fresh snowfall in Kashmir also took place on the first day of *Chillai Kalan*, a 40-day harsh spell of winter. The day is also observed as 'Pheran Day' to celebrate the traditional woollen robes worn by locals during winters.

Fifteen flights were cancelled due to inclement weather at the Srinagar airport. The Srinagar Meteorological Department predicted light snowfall in some parts of the Valley on Monday.

Coal scam PIL petitioner M.L. Sharma passes away

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Advocate Manohar Lal Sharma, who filed many public interest litigation petitions, including in the coal block allocation scam case, passed away at 69 on Friday. He was suffering from a kidney ailment, according to a family source.

In a landmark judgment, the top court in 2014 declared that the coal allocation between 1993 and 2009 was illegal, arbitrary, non-transparent, and devoid of any procedure.

Sharma filed many PIL pleas, including those challenging the government's decision to abrogate Article 370, probe into the Pegasus spyware issue, and the Rafale case.

Sharma also defended an accused in the 2012 Nirbhaya gang-rape case in Delhi.

Jitan Manjhi demands Rajya Sabha seat for party

Press Trust of India
PATNA

Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi on Sunday alleged unfair treatment within the NDA and indicated that he might have to reconsider his options if his party, Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM), was not allotted a Rajya Sabha seat.

The former Bihar Chief Minister made the remarks in his Gayaji Lok Sabha constituency.

Mr. Manjhi spoke of the "treachery" he claimed to have faced within the alliance. Mr. Manjhi said, "We will have to chart our own path if we don't get our due."

However, when journalists approached him with more queries, Mr. Manjhi backtracked and said, "Please do not twist my words out of context."

Elephant calf injured in Assam train collision dies; Centre seeks report

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The elephant calf, less than a week old, was brought to the centre with fractured legs and damaged organs. RITU RAJ KONWAR

An elephant calf hit by an express train in central Assam's Hojai district on Saturday died of injuries at an animal rescue centre near Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve 24 hours later.

Bhaskar Choudhury, a veterinarian at the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC), said the calf, less than a week old, was brought to the centre with fractured legs and damaged organs.

"The calf was bleeding from the mouth. We tried our best, but could not save it," he said on Sunday.

The centre is about 110 km east of the railway section between Jamunamukh and Kampur, where the Sairang Rajdhani Express ploughed through a herd crossing the track, killing seven elephants. The collision spot is 126 km east of Guwahati.

Earlier, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma instructed the Forest Department to probe the incident. He sought improved safety measures along wildlife corridors, particularly during periods when visibility is reduced.

Northeast Frontier Railway officials stated that the location where the accident happened was not a notified elephant corridor.

'Ensure speed limits'

Conservationists said that it was a high-risk zone, requiring the strict implementation of speed limits and enhanced surveillance. They said such collisions occur when herds move from one forest patch to another, with railway tracks cutting through their migration routes.

Union Minister Bhupender Yadav on Sunday said the Centre had sought a report on the death of the elephants. He said all States have been asked to monitor elephant movements along railway lines.

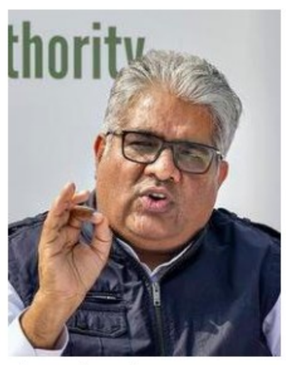
"The railway authorities have been directed to coordinate with the Forest Departments of States on elephant movement along the tracks. A report on elephant deaths has been sought," the Minister said.

"A team was formed with the DRM Railways, DFO and local people as stakeholders in the area concerned and in every such locality where elephant habitat and train lines exist," Mr. Yadav added.

(With inputs from PTI)

Environment Minister reviews measures to address human-wildlife conflict

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA



Bhupender Yadav

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) on Sunday appraised the expansion of Project Cheetah and reviewed measures to address human-wildlife conflict at high-level meetings chaired by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav at the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve.

The 28th meeting of the NTCA and the 22nd Steering Committee meeting of Project Elephant brought together officials, scientists and field experts from tiger-and elephant-range States to review progress and future strategies, the Environment Ministry said in a statement.

Chairing the NTCA meeting, Mr. Yadav underscored the importance of science-based management, landscape-level planning, community participation and inter-State coordination in India's globally recognised tiger conservation model.

The meeting focused on challenges faced by tiger reserves. Measures to address human-tiger conflict, including a three-pronged strategy, and the project 'Management of Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves', were highlighted, the statement said. Issues such as staff shortages, financial constraints, habitat degradation and invasive species management were also reviewed.

The NTCA ratified decisions of its technical committee, including approval of tiger conservation plans, extension and expansion of Project Cheetah, tiger translocation, prey augmentation, landscape management planning, and carnivore health management training programmes.

The Project Elephant Steering Committee reviewed regional action plans for elephant conservation in southern and northeastern India.

'Nuclear energy Bill rushed in Parliament for Trump and Adani'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday accused the Narendra Modi government of "bulldozing" the SHANTI Bill, which allows private participation in India's nuclear sector and eases liability norms for operators, through Parliament, alleging it was done "not only for TRUMP but also for ADANI."

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh cited a media report on social media platform X claiming that the Adani Group plans to enter the nuclear energy sector after private firms are allowed into the field.

On Thursday, Parliament cleared the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod to legislation that opens the tightly controlled civil nuclear sector to private participation.

Replying to a discussion on the Bill, Minister of State for Atomic Energy Jitendra Singh said it aims to make India self-reliant in nuclear energy and reduce dependence on other sources of energy.

The Congress used political wordplay to attack the Centre for favouring U.S. interests and large corporations. "SHANTI was bulldozed through in Parliament not only for TRUMP (The Reactor Use Management Programme) but also for ADANI (Accelerated Damaging Adhiniyam for Nuclear India)," Mr. Ramesh said.

SHANTI Bill gets approval from President Murmu

President Droupadi Murmu has granted assent to the SHANTI Bill, passed by Parliament during the Winter Session. A government notification said that the President granted assent on Saturday. The Bill opens up civil nuclear sector for participation by private players. It repealed the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010. PTI

'Dilutes key provisions'

On Saturday, Mr. Ramesh had accused the government of pushing the Bill to help Prime Minister Modi restore "SHANTI" with his "once good friend".

The senior Congress leader had further claimed that the legislation dilutes key provisions of the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act – an issue flagged in the U.S. National Defence Authorisation Act for 2026.

Referring to the Act signed by U.S. President Donald Trump, Mr. Ramesh said in a post on X: "The Act is 3,100 pages long. Page 1,912 has a reference to the joint assessment between the United States and India on nuclear liability rules."

Congress settled Bangladeshi migrants in Assam, says Modi

The Prime Minister sharpens his anti-migrant rhetoric in the border State; says it was BJP which provided land rights to tea plantation workers and flays the grand old party for 'neglecting locals'

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing a gathering at Namrup in Dibrugarh district on Sunday. PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi repeated his attack on the Congress, accusing it of illegally settling Bangladeshi migrants in Assam and protecting them.

Addressing a gathering in Dibrugarh district of eastern Assam on Sunday, he criticised the grand old party for neglecting the land rights of tea plantation workers in the State.

Major voting blocs

Migrant Bengali-speaking Muslims, often given the "Bangladeshi" tag, and Adivasis of central Indian origin, referred to as "tea tribes", are believed to constitute the two largest "vote banks" in Assam, where Assembly elections are due in less than six months.

While the Muslims are perceived to be pro-Congress, the Adivasis are said to have gravitated toward the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"Congress has no concern for the identity of Assam and its people. They are interested only in power and continuing with their anti-India agenda," Mr. Modi said.

Speaking at the event after laying the foundation stone for a ₹10,601-crore brownfield ammonia-urea plant in Namrup in Dibrugarh district, Mr. Modi, carrying on from where he left off on Saturday, said: "Congress likes illegal Bangladeshi migrants, and is protecting them after having settled them. This is the reason why Congress is opposing the ongoing exercise to correct the voters' list."

The PM was speaking at an event to lay the foundation stone of ₹10,601-cr. fertilizer plant in Dibrugarh

Mr. Modi said the bid to consolidate its vote bank is behind the Congress's agenda to settle Bangladeshi people on Assam's lands and forests. "You [the indigenous communities] get destroyed [in the process], but they are not bothered. They have to strengthen their vote-bank," he told the gathering.

'Protect State's identity'

Asserting that Assam has to be protected from the "poison" of appeasement and vote bank politics, he assured the people that the BJP would always stand with them to protect Assam's identity and honour.

"The BJP prioritises every work that enhances Assam's prestige. But when it does that, the Congress gets troubled the most. When our government conferred Bharat Ratna on Bhupen *da* (cultural icon Bhupen Hazarika), the Congress openly opposed it," the Prime Minister said.

He also slammed the Congress for opposing the semiconductor unit being established at Jagiroad in Morigaon district.

"Despite being in power for many decades, the Congress denied land rights to Assam's tea garden community. The BJP government has given them land rights, as well as a dignified life. As a *chaiwalla*, if I don't do it, who will?" the Prime Minister said.

The ammonia-urea plant to be set up by the Assam Valley Fertilizer and Chemical Company Limited will have an annual output of 12.7 lakh tonnes.

The project is scheduled for commissioning in 2030.

Congress hits streets over 'desecration' of MGNREGA scheme

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress workers stage protest against the Centre's decision to replace the MGNREGA scheme

The Congress continued its attack on the Union government for "dismantling" and "desecrating" the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

The party held nationwide protests on Sunday at all district headquarters.

Party general Secretary (Organisation) K.C. Venugopal, in a post on X, said the Modi government had effectively dismantled the MGNREGA by converting it from a right to a favour.

"MGNREGA was a legal right to work, not a welfare handout. By capping funds, centralising control, and altering its demand-driven nature, the BJP has turned this right into a budget-dependent scheme, pushing crores of rural families into insecurity and distress," he said.

More protest planned

Mr. Venugopal added that the Congress Working Committee would deliberate on the future course of action on the 'serious assault on the right to work' at its meeting on December 27.

"Subsequently, on December 28 – our Foundation Day – Congress workers will hold programmes in mandals and panchayats across India, carrying portraits of Mahatma Gandhi, reaffirming our commitment to his ideals and to the constitutional promise of justice, dignity, and the right to work," he said.

'Progress overturned'

Party general secretary (ommunication) and former Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh accused the government of overturning two decades of progress "without consultation" and by "sidestepping parliamentary conventions".

He shared a 2012 review document of the scheme released by the UPA government, highlighting achievements such as increased rural wages, reduced distress migration, cultivation of barren land, and empowerment of weaker sections.

The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill passed by the Rajya Sabha with a voice vote late on Thursday night, hours after the Lok Sabha cleared it, effectively replaced the 20-year-old MGNREGA.

Mahayuti dominates civic elections in Maharashtra

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Electoral euphoria: BJP candidate Dinesh Koche celebrates with supporters following the declaration of results in Wadi rural area. PTI

The ruling Mahayuti alliance won 207 municipal councils and nagar panchayat seats of the 288 that went to the polls in Maharashtra, securing a single largest majority, according to data from the State Election Commission.

The BJP won most of them, securing 117 seats, followed by the Shiv Sena which emerged victorious in 53 seats while the NCP claimed 37 seats.

On the other hand, the Congress won 28 seats, the Shiv Sena (UBT) nine and the NCP(SP) seven. As a coalition, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) secured 44 constituencies.

Candidates from unrecognised parties won 28 seats and five seats were secured by Independents. Other registered parties but not from Maharashtra secured four civic bodies.

BJP single largest party

District-wise, the BJP won the most number of local bodies in Nagpur, securing 22 municipal councils and nagar panchayats followed by the NCP, which won in 10 seats in Pune. Apart from these two, no other party won more than seven seats in a district. The Shiv Sena won the most number of constituencies (six seats) among the ones it contested in Jalgoan district.

The Congress won most number of seats in Chandrapur district, securing seven constituencies. Among the MVA parties, the Congress is the only party that won more than five seats in a district. The NCP(SP) and the Shiv Sena (UBT) did not win more than two seats in a district, with the latter winning two in Yavatmal.

In a post on X, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis expressed his gratitude to the people and his party workers for the mandate. "This remarkable success belongs to our dedicated Karyakartas; it is their hard work, commitment, and perseverance that has made this victory possible," he said.

"Those who tried to make us sit at home have been made to sit at home by the people themselves. Through these results, voters have clearly shown who belongs to the real Shiv Sena," Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said in a statement.

He further stated that the local body elections had shown that the Shiv Sena was more than just Thane and Mumbai and was popular even in Raigad, Palghar, Konkan and other areas.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar too expressed his gratitude to the party workers and people for keeping faith and bringing this mandate to them.

In X posts, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah congratulated the members and leaders of the Mahayuti for the mandate.

'Paperwork cannot erase the Mahatma, he lives in our hearts'

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

The J&K Congress held demonstrations over the renaming of the national-level rural jobs scheme

The Congress on Sunday held a street protest in Srinagar over dropping the name of Mahatma Gandhi from an national-level employment scheme by the Centre.

"Mahatma Gandhi lives in the hearts of the people and cannot be removed by paperwork. The BJP is under a delusion. Removing Mahatma Gandhi's name from official records cannot erase his philosophy," J&K Congress president and legislator Tariq Hamid Karra said.

Mr. Karra raised anti-government and pro-Gandhi slogans along with his supporters.

He said renaming the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme to Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) was unacceptable to the party.

Mr. Karra said the Centre also reset the policy on a 60-40 funding pattern, which will put a burden on States.

"Regions like J&K lack resources to meet basic needs such as water, roads, and electricity and cannot afford to bear 40 percent of the cost," Mr. Karra said.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYAT RAJ DEPARTMENT
DISTRICT RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY,TIRUPPUR
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
SCPAR 2025-26
ROC No.4851/2025/A7 DATED : 19.12.2025
1. For Details, visit www.tntenders.gov.in
2. e-Bids are invited by the Project Direct, DRDA Tiruppur, for Water supply works (2 Packages) in Kangayam block with Two Cover System.
3.The Package wise bid documents can be downloaded at free of cost from www.tntenders.gov.in from 22.12.2025 to 05.01.2026
4. Common Date and time for downloading of Bid document, submission and opening:

i)	Last date and time for downloading and Online submission of Bid Documents	05.01.2026 Up to 03.00 PM.
ii)	Date and Time of Online Opening of Bid Documents	05.01.2026 04.00 PM onwards

DIPR/6768/TENDER/2025
Joint Director/Project Director, DRDA, Tiruppur.

THE HINDU GROUP

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After seven seasons of belief, Lando Norris seals his first Formula One World Championship, emerging from a fierce three-way fight to claim motorsport's ultimate prize.

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Why IPL teams are betting big on potential over pedigree at the 2026 auction, and Noah Lyles opens up on legacy, vulnerability, and greatness beyond the stopwatch.

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INBRIEF

FCI train carrying 1,384 tonnes of foodgrains reaches Kashmir

In a first, a Food Corporation of India (FCI) freight train from Punjab reached the Anantnag Goods Terminal in Kashmir on Sunday, carrying around 1,384 tonnes of foodgrains. The freight service was started in Kashmir earlier this year. A spokesman of the FCI termed it as "a major milestone for rail-based logistics in the Kashmir Valley" and "formally integrating the region with the national freight rail network". "The movement marks the first instance of bulk foodgrain transportation by rail directly to South Kashmir," the spokesman said. The arrival of the train is a major step to ensure an uninterrupted and efficient supply of foodgrains to the Valley.

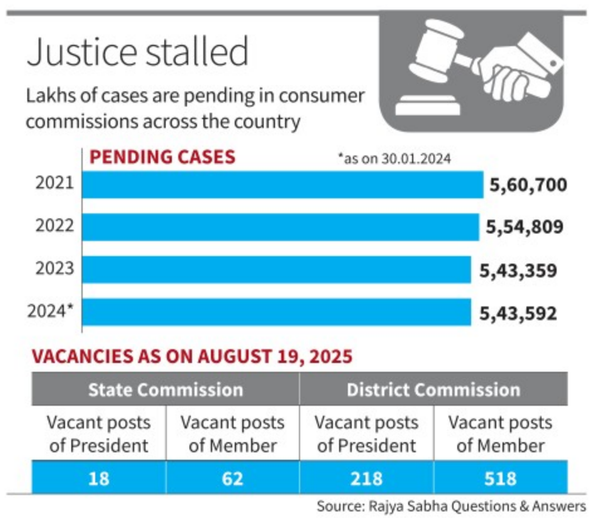
Air India issues notice to pilot in passenger assault incident

Air India Express will set up an external committee next week to inquire into the incident of one of its off-duty captain assaulting a passenger at the Delhi airport on Friday, sources said. Soon after the incident, the Tata Group-owned airline suspended the pilot and the sources said a show-cause notice had also been served on him seeking an explanation. The proceedings are being carried under the labour laws as a pilot comes under the workmen category. The incident occurred at Terminal 1 of the Delhi airport. On Saturday, the Civil Aviation Ministry said it has taken serious cognisance of the incident and directed the airline to ground the pilot with immediate effect. PTI

Speedy justice eludes consumers seeking redress against sellers

Long travel, repeated adjournments, and mounting backlogs are turning consumer courts into a test of endurance for litigants; vacancies in consumer commissions, limited courtrooms, and procedural hurdles further exacerbate their plight

Soibam Rocky Singh
NEW DELHI



For many wronged consumers across India, the promise of "speedy justice" enshrined in law remains distant. Consumer courts, conceived as accessible and inexpensive forums for ordinary citizens, have increasingly become arenas of prolonged litigation.

That reality unfolds in the life of 60-year-old Ashok (name changed), whose consumer dispute has been pending for nearly a decade. At 4 a.m., the small paint factory owner locks his home in Panchkula, Chandigarh, and takes the long road to Delhi.

His case relates to an insurance claim arising out of a fire that gutted his small paint factory in 2015. When the Bench rises for the day, his matter remains unheard. The court master announces the next date – six months later. "This has been happening for the past three years. For one reason or another, my case never comes up. I don't know what to do anymore," he says.

Twenty-eight-year-old Raju (name changed) from a small district in Chhattisgarh had dreamt of setting up a paper cup manufacturing unit five years ago. He paid the full amount online for a paper cup-making machine and took loan from a local bank to fund the purchase. The machine never arrived.

Mr. Raju has since been embroiled in protracted litigation – first before the district consumer court, and later at the State forum. His case has now reached the National Consumer Court after the opposite party decided to challenge the order passed in his favour in the lower forums. Each hearing requires him to undertake a 24-hour train journey to the national capital, with no assurance that his case will actually be heard. "The last date was November 24. My case did not come up because the court's time got exhausted with cases at the top of the list," he recalls.

Stories such as Mr. Ashok's and Mr. Raju's mirror a systemic crisis playing out across consumer courts nationwide.

A response by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution in Parliament shows that as of January 30, 2024, a total of 5.43 lakh consumer complaints were pending before district, State and national consumer commissions.

In 2024, the commissions received 1.73 lakh fresh cases but disposed of only 1.58 lakh, leading to a net increase of nearly 14,900 cases. The trend continued in 2025. Up to July this year, 78,031 new complaints were filed, while 65,537 cases were disposed of. This backlog persists despite clear statutory timelines under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. Section 38(7) of the Act mandates that complaints be decided within three months where no testing or analysis is required, and within five months where such examination is necessary.

The law also explicitly discourages delays, stating that adjournments should not ordinarily be granted unless sufficient cause is shown and reasons are recorded in writing.

Structural bottlenecks

Advocate Anand Prakash attributes the delays to deep-rooted structural issues. "Many consumer commissions are burdened with thousands of pending matters and lack sufficient staff, modern facilities, or effective digital case management systems," he says. "Vacancies in judicial and non-judicial posts, limited courtrooms and logistical constraints continue to impede timely hearings."

The staffing crisis has intensified over time. As of August 19, 2025, 18 posts of President and 62 posts of Member were vacant in State Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions. At the district level, 218 posts of President and 518 posts of Member remained vacant.

Another challenge, Mr. Prakash says, lies in the nature of disputes themselves. "Many commission Members are legally trained but lack subject-matter expertise in specialised areas."

This often necessitates expert opinions, laboratory reports, or technical clarifications, leading to repeated adjournments.

Delays are also caused by procedural hurdles – non-service of notices, late filing of affidavits, and requests for time to submit additional evidence.

ISRO set to launch mobile broadband satellite

Press Trust of India
CHENNAI

The Indian Space Research Organisation's upcoming LVM3 M6 mission will place the BlueBird Block-2 satellite into orbit on December 24 under a commercial agreement with the U.S.-based AST SpaceMobile. The mission will deploy a next-generation communication satellite aimed at providing high-speed cellular broadband directly to smartphones across the globe.

AST SpaceMobile is building a space-based cellular broadband network intended for both commercial and government use. The company says its objective is to bridge connectivity gaps faced by billions of mobile users worldwide.

AST SpaceMobile has launched five satellites – BlueBird 1-5 in September 2024, which enable continuous Internet coverage across the U.S. and other select countries. The company has planned to launch similar satellites to augment its network support and has partnered with over 50 mobile operators across the globe. The BlueBird Block-2 satellite will be the largest commercial communication satellite to be deployed into low earth orbit.

At PDP's outreach event, youth raise concern over quota policy, joblessness

Peerzada Ashiq
JAMMU

Jammu's youth spoke up on pressing issues like reservation, disempowerment, and injustice at a youth conference titled *Gal Baath,* an outreach programme started by the Opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). This comes after doctors from Kashmir were linked to the Red Fort blast.

Mehbooba Mufti

Besides unemployment and drug abuse, several speakers highlighted the reservation policy that puts open merit students at "disadvantage" with only 30% quota. "It's unfortunate that real indicators like income are not considered for reservation. Economically weaker sections should benefit more from reservation and not others," Vinkal Sharma, a student activist, said.

Advocate Ana Durrani highlighted the injustices in society. "Anyone who talks about corruption is being described as an anti-national. People like Sonam Wangchuk are seen as a national threat and booked under the National Security Act (NSA). It is time to focus on our rights and what we do about them," Ms. Durrani said.

Praising the youth of Jammu for their heartfelt speeches, former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said, "There is no dialogue with the youth in J&K. A doctor who is supposed to be helping others kills innocent people [at the Red Fort on November 10]. We need to understand what makes them anxious. As a party, what can the PDP do to reduce the difficulties faced by the people of Jammu?" Ms. Mufti said.

She said after the Centre ended J&K's special status in 2019, the Jammu region saw the opening of a floodgate. "Outsiders are flowing in, and crime is increasing…," Ms. Mufti said.

Water scarcity threatens model tribal school in Maharashtra that stemmed seasonal migration

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
TRYAMBAKESHWAR/NASHIK

Six-year-old Ananya Gavit can write with both her hands, read English textbooks meant for sixth graders and recite Articles from the Constitution of India. Like her, 59 children who come to the Zilla Parishad School in Hiwali, a remote tribal hamlet in Maharashtra's Tryambakeshwar taluka in Nashik district, find a second home here. They are protected from seasonal migration.

Teacher Keshav Gavit with students at the Zilla Parishad School in Tryambakeshwar, Nashik district. VINAYA DESHPANDE PANDIT

The school runs 365 days of the year, 12 hours a day, providing two meals to the children. There are no weekends, no public holidays. The teachers come every day, so do students, many from as far as 22 km. In fact, one parent from a tribal district which is over 110 km from this school, has taken a room on rent in the hamlet to ensure education for his child. The dropout rate is zero. The focus is on activity-based, experiential and hands-on learning, with an emphasis on vocational training, agriculture. The children are also prepared for competitive examinations.

The impact of the school and the attention it has garnered, has led to the transformation of the entire village. Hiwali has been declared a zero-addiction village by the Zilla Parishad. Villagers have started community programmes. They have started sending all their children to school. The nameplate on each house now has the name of the daughter. So far, teachers from 128 schools from Nashik have visited this tribal school to emulate the model.

But, the school is now fighting water scarcity, an issue which scares the teachers. They fear that if it is not addressed, it will ruin years of painstaking efforts to bring the children into mainstream, and will lead to migration among the children yet again. Their demands – a KT dam and solar power. A KT dam, or Kolhapur-Type Weir, is a low-cost, gravity-based riverbed structure developed in Kolhapur, that acts as a small dam or barrage to store post-monsoon river flow for irrigation and water supply.

"Earlier, we would see the seasonal migration of children, when their parents would go to the cities looking for daily wage jobs. But now, one of the parents stays back to bring the children to school…," Keshav Kalibai Chandar Gavit, the teacher who is credited with turning the school around, said.

It is a unique school for the style of pedagogy and the level of engagement of the children. It has been carefully built over the last two decades to bring the children of tribal labourers into mainstream education.

Official response

Nashik Chief Executive Officer Omkar Pawar told *The Hindu* that efforts were on to set up facilities to give tap water to each household. "This region has hard rock. So there are challenges for the storage of water-…But if the village wants a small dam, the administration can definitely help to get that done…," he said.

TH CROSSWORD + 14671

(set by Incognito)

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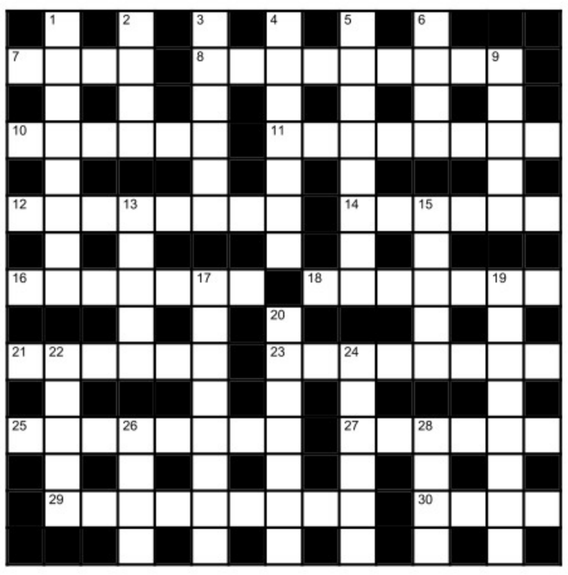
SCAN TO PLAY



Across

7 Cry at sea (4)
8 Explain, "It's intricate" (9)
10 Foreigners having right in Assam (6)
11 New iPod lost in MIT centre (8)
12 Go back and sketch (8)
14 Reveal evil changes by United Nations (6)
16 Poster about meandering river came (7)
18 Insects behind tea-cup (7)
21 Saint, with tears, removes clothes (6)
23 Filming a sort of star (8)
25 Mother takes vehicle on island to get some pasta (8)
27 Small stones starting to litter behind burial site (6)
29 Clearly inform: "Place" with this type of clue (3,6)
30 Suspend in Changanassery (4)

Down

1 Colder hill has rice transplanted around it (8)
2 Park in London for literary doctor (4)
3 I'm leaving Emirates to make promotional trailer (6)
4 Why moa dances on small ricks of dried grass? (7)
5 Abe leaving shoulder bag when travelling for migration with motive of mining precious metal (4,4)
6 Mexican food available in Delta, Colorado (4)
9 What nine playing around university experienced? (5)
13 Model leaving Tahiti... making for Caribbean country (5)
15 Virginia permitted manservant (5)
17 Displace cones at northern church lodge (8)
19 Pertains to business firms (8)
20 Actor Justin overacting partially (7)
22 Vagrant's tense on sloping road (5)
24 Endlessly more gas producing intense pleasure? (6)
26 Wager in Canterbury (4)
28 To some extent, brash yachter is pale (4)

SUDOKU

7		3				2		
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	4				5			
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		1	5		2	7		
2			4	7		8		3
			2				6	
5	8		6					
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

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	W		S		Y		Y		G		S		F	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	2	5	6	8	4	9	3	1
3	6	9	2	1	5	7	8	4
8	4	1	7	3	9	6	5	2
1	7	3	8	9	6	4	2	5
4	5	6	1	2	7	3	9	8
2	9	8	4	5	3	1	6	7
9	3	2	5	7	1	8	4	6
6	8	7	9	4	2	5	1	3
5	1	4	3	6	8	2	7	9

FAITH

Krishna cared for Pandavas

Duryodhana never cared about his own well-being. He only wanted the Pandavas not to succeed. Driven by jealousy, he made plan after plan to break them apart. Meanwhile, the Pandavas trusted Lord Krishna completely, showing deep devotion. Dr. Venkatesh said in a discourse that Krishna protected and saved the Pandavas in many remarkable ways.

When Draupathi was humiliated by Dussasana, she called out to 'Govinda' in a state of helplessness. Even though Lord Krishna was not there, He rescued her, showing that His "Nama" has the power to protect and save. Likewise, when sage Durvasa arrived with many disciples to test the Pandavas, Lord Krishna again helped them, turning a serious problem into a moment of grace. For His devotees, the Lord will take even the simplest role. His humility stands out in His choice to act as a messenger for the Pandavas. Because He cared for them, Lord Krishna said the enemies of His devotees were His own and declared that the Pandavas were as close to Him as his own breath. The Lord even changes the cosmic order to protect those who trust Him. For example, Lord Krishna altered the date of the war's start that Sahadeva had predicted at Duryodhana's request. The Lord also helped the Pandavas defeat Jayadratha, who was unconquerable, and protected them from Narayana astra, the most powerful one released by Aswathama. Arjuna would not have been saved from the Nagastra released by Karna but for the timely action of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna also blessed Arjuna with the "Gitopadesa," a timeless spiritual teaching still revered today.

Dealing with reality of pollution

Sarbvir Singh

Every winter, India finds itself debating reasons behind mounting AQI. This one now repeats with such precision each year it can be forecast almost like the monsoon. Data from hospitals and health insurers tells a grimmer story. It is becoming a health emergency for children.

An analysis of pollution-related claims indicate children under 10 account for 43% of all hospitalisations, disproportionately making them the single-largest demographic group most vulnerable to toxic air. Children breathe more air relative to body weight, and hence are likely to absorb more pollutants and PM 2.5 particles.

Each bout contributes to long-term health consequences and recurring health burden for families.

While Delhi continues to record the highest share of claims at 38%, the pattern is not just confined to the northern belt. Bengaluru and Hyderabad now exceed many northern cities in the ratio of pollution-related claims against all health claims. Tier-2 towns such as Indore, Jaipur and Lucknow are also reporting a faster rise in hospital visits around this time.

What is perhaps most concerning is pollution is now affecting organs far beyond the lungs. We see claims emerging from cardiac complications, arrhythmias, hypertension episodes, skin flare-ups, allergic conjunctivitis, and even pregnancy-related issues. This echoes findings from T*he Lancet Commission* and ICMR, which confirm particulate pollution triggers inflammation across multiple systems.

With seasonal and environmental risks becoming more common, insurers would need to rethink how to incorporate these risks into underwriting, coverage design and pricing.

This is crucial because it is not just the spike in hospitalisation claims, but also the steady rise in the cost of treatment. As per our report, treatment costs for respiratory illnesses rose by 11% between FY23 and FY24. Meanwhile, treatment costs of cardiac complications grew by 6%. The trends reflect longer hospital stays and more intensive intervention. With average claims near ₹55,000 and daily hospital costs approaching ₹19,000, the burden on families, especially those without insurance, continues to deepen. This makes affordable, well-structured health coverage more important than ever.

What lies ahead

To be fair, the health insurance industry has begun moving in the right direction. OPD-inclusive health plans are seeing accelerated adoption as families now recognise pollution-related illnesses require frequent consultations, diagnostics and doctor advice. Some insurers have begun building real-time, location-sensitive risk models that help anticipate seasonal spikes and prepare networks accordingly. Digital platforms are playing their part too by making these plans easily accessible for the customer.

But the harder work still lies ahead. As pollution becomes a recurring national health burden, the industry must take a more proactive approach. That means dedicated pollution-linked health plans, annual lung screenings, proactive respiratory check-ups for children and structured disease-management programmes for asthma and COPD patients.

It means partnering with the healthcare sector. It also means expanding the definition of coverage. If pollution-triggered illnesses are now unavoidable for urban families, then the products that protects them must evolve just as predictably. Ultimately, pollution will not be solved by health insurance/healthcare alone. The industry must shift from reacting to hospitalisations to reducing them. Data makes it clear the pollution crisis is turning into a generational health challenge and unless we actively work upon it, we risk normalising harm that will impact generations to come.

(The writer is Joint Group CEO, PB Fintech)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

Money matters: Misvestment occurs when tax relief is mistaken for wealth (value) creation. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

When 'misvestment' has more facets than is known

What if today's so-called sensible decisions quietly prevent wealth from growing tomorrow and beyond? The real answer may lie in the concept of misvestment, not markets alone

CODE RED

Vaishali R Venkat

A week ago, my friend Rathi called and asked for suggestions on investment avenues. When I asked her about her goal, she said, "I have three more months before the financial year ends. I want to save on taxes."

The urgency to reduce tax had already defined the decision. Often, misvestment wears disguises. Last week, we examined a few investor archetypes. Now, let us unpack the rest.

The Taxvestor

Taxvestors' investment choices begin with options of reducing Tax Deducted at Source (TDS).

As a result, they choose tax-saving instruments without examining returns, lock-in period or long-term impact. Most of the traditional tax-saving options struggle to deliver returns beyond 6-8%, barely keeping pace with inflation, leave alone real wealth creation.

Misvestment occurs when tax relief is mistaken for wealth (value) creation. Tax-saving instruments offer some immediate and tangible benefit but, in the process, you incur an opportunity cost (cost of missing an opportunity) by locking hard-earned money into such low-return-yielding financial instruments that may quietly erode long-term growth. Imagine locking ₹1,50,000 a year at just 7.1% interest rate per annum in PPF for 15 years. While it satisfies tax-saving needs in the short term, the returns may barely outpace inflation, limiting real wealth creation. Over time, what feels like a prudent year-end tax-saving decision can turn into wealth destroyer. This is not because tax planning is wrong, but because it is misunderstood as investing.

> When wealth generation becomes the objective and decisions are aligned with goals, risk and time horizon, investing moves towards building lasting value

> Real investing begins where misvestment ends. It starts with clarity of goal, focus on intrinsic value creation and patience to allow compounding to work

The Fomovestor

Now imagine this. A large land-promotion event is held on the city outskirts. Your favourite celebrities associated with the developer participate in the event, adding credibility and excitement. The promoter announces "most plots are already booked" and only a few remain. Buyers are told the current price is valid only for three days and rates will be revised shortly. The promoter also adds sweeteners: "If you book a plot today, you will get one gram of gold coin; and if you book five plots, you will get an electric scooter for free. Further, an extra discount of ₹50 per square foot will be offered for the early birds." Such cues are enough for Fomovestors to jump onto the bandwagon. They watch others rushing to book and simply follow suit driven by the Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO). What convinces them is the urgency created around it. For a Fomovestor, this opportunity feels rare and hesitation like a loss. They perceive speed as security and evaluation as risk. Misvestment occurs when the fear of missing out overrides patience, due diligence and timing.

The Trendvestor

A Trendvestor chases trends and follows the market's flavour of the moment. If meme coins are flying off the shelves today, Trendvestors join the wave until something else captures their attention. EV stocks one year, defence shares the next, meme coins when social media buzz peaks and so on.

The trend itself becomes the signal to buy. Misvestment occurs when momentum is mistaken for merit. By the time most Trendvestors enter, the trend is often mature. They end up buying at peak or near-peak prices rather than buy on the dips.

The Hotvestor

Hotvestors 'invest' in moments of excitement. A sudden price spike, buzzing IPO day or a viral tip is enough to trigger action. The decision is impulsive. At first glance, Trendvestors and Hotvestors may look similar, but they are not. Trendvestors buy because something has been rising for a while and the trend is visible over time and Hotvestors buy as it feels suddenly exciting at that moment.

The Greenvestor

Greenvestors 'invest' to align money with ethical values. Environmental impact, social cause or ethical intent becomes the primary filter, often outweighing returns, valuation or risk. For instance, a Greenvestor invests in ESG or the so-called "ethical" or "green" options, even if returns take a back seat.

Real investment

Real investing begins where misvestment ends. It starts with clarity of goal, a focus on intrinsic value creation and the patience to let compounding work over time. When wealth generation becomes the objective and decisions are aligned with goals, risk and time horizon, investing moves away from reacting to noise and towards building lasting value.

(The writer is an NISM & CRISIL-certified Wealth Manager and certified in NISM's Research Analyst module)

When less is not always less

COVERNOTE

K. Nitya Kalyani

Renewing car insurance on the same terms should be the simplest of tasks. Yet, often motorists unknowingly pay more for less. While reviewing his renewal quotation, a friend noticed something puzzling. The insured value of his car had reduced, as expected – but premium had risen. "How can that be?" he asked.

The Insured Declared Value (IDV) represents the sum insured under a motor policy - the maximum amount payable if the car is stolen, lost, or damaged beyond repair. Since a car's market value depreciates over time, the IDV reduces annually in line with the insurer's depreciation schedule. Logically, a lower sum insured should mean a lower premium.

Premium up

In practice, however, insurers often raise the premium rate as the car ages. Steep discounts are offered in early years – sometimes almost 90%! But wait, that can be only on paper as renewal quotations can also include bundled add-ons you neither asked for nor can opt out of. Some insurers even load a personal accident cover, charging ₹750 to ₹1,000 extra, despite this cover already being included in the mandatory third-party (TP) policy. Such duplication inflates premium.

There are several ways in which a renewal quote can mislead if you are unwary. Start by checking if the correct no-claim bonus (NCB) had been applied. Next, if this is the first or second renewal of a new car, verify if the quote covers only the Own Damage (OD) portion of the policy.

To see why this matters, go back to the time of purchase. When a new car is bought, insurance is usually arranged by the dealer as part of the delivery package. While buyers are legally free to choose their insurer, those who try often encounter subtle pressure - preferred registration dates becoming unavailable, cashless repair facilities being withdrawn or other "non-tariff" barriers. In the excitement of buying a new car, most buyers simply accept the bundled insurance. Every motor policy has two components: third-party liability (TP) and own damage (OD). TP covers losses caused to others, while OD pays for damage to your own vehicle. For new cars, TP insurance is mandatory for three years upfront. Consequently, the first-year premium includes three years of TP cover and one year of OD cover.

At the first renewal, only the OD premium is payable. The total renewal amount, therefore, looks substantially lower - a detail that is easy to miss and one often used to project the quote as 'competitive,' though the coverage structure itself has changed. The lesson is simple. Never judge a motor cover renewal by the headline premium alone. Examine the IDV, discounts applied, add-ons bundled, and - crucially - what portion of the policy you are actually paying for. When it comes to renewals, 'less' can easily turn out to be more. We have only scratched the surface. More on this soon.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%) Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Small Finance Banks				
AU Small Finance Bank	7.10	6.35	7.10	6.75
Equitas Small Finance Bank	7.30	7.00	7.00	7.00
ESAF Small Finance Bank	7.60	4.75	6.00	5.75
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.00	7.50	8.00
Shivalik Small Finance Bank	7.30	6.00	7.00	6.50
slice Small Finance Bank	7.75	6.25	7.50	7.00
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	8.00	7.25	7.25	8.00
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	7.45	7.25	7.20	7.20
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	7.50	6.00	7.50	7.00
Private Sector Banks				
Axis Bank	6.60	6.25	6.60	6.60
Bandhan Bank	7.20	7.00	7.00	5.85
City Union Bank	6.75	6.50	6.50	6.25
CSB Bank	7.00	5.00	5.75	5.75
DBS Bank	6.60	6.30	6.40	6.25
DCB Bank	7.15	6.90	7.00	7.00
Federal Bank	6.75	6.25	6.75	6.50
HDFC Bank	6.45	6.25	6.45	6.40
ICICI Bank	6.60	6.25	6.60	6.60
IDFC FIRST Bank	7.00	6.30	7.00	7.00
IndusInd Bank	7.00	6.75	6.90	6.65
Jammu & Kashmir Bank	7.00	6.50	6.65	6.60
Karur Vysya Bank	6.80	6.55	6.55	6.55
Karnataka Bank	6.65	6.50	6.15	6.15
Kotak Mahindra Bank	6.70	6.25	6.40	6.25
RBL Bank	7.20	7.00	7.20	6.70
SBM Bank India	7.30	7.00	7.10	7.00
South Indian Bank	6.60	6.60	6.20	5.70
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	6.90	6.80	6.60	6.60
YES Bank	7.00	6.65	7.00	6.75
Public Sector Banks				
Bank of Baroda	6.60	6.25	6.50	6.40
Bank of India	6.70	6.25	6.25	6.00
Bank of Maharashtra	6.55	6.20	5.25	5.00
Canara Bank	6.15	5.90	5.90	5.90
Central Bank of India	6.50	6.20	6.00	6.00
Indian Bank	6.60	6.10	6.25	6.00
Indian Overseas Bank	6.60	6.50	6.10	6.10
Punjab National Bank	6.50	6.25	6.40	6.25
Punjab & Sind Bank	6.60	5.85	5.85	5.95
State Bank of India	6.45	6.25	6.30	6.05
Union Bank of India	6.30	6.25	6.00	5.90

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.) Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
			(In %)
Public Sector Banks			
State Bank of India	7.25-8.70	7.25-8.70	7.25-8.70
Bank of Baroda	7.45-9.25	7.45-9.25	7.45-9.50
Punjab National Bank	7.25-9.10	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.00
Bank of India	7.10-10.00	7.10-10.00	7.10-10.25
Bank of Maharashtra	7.10-9.90	7.10-9.90	7.10-9.90
Punjab and Sind Bank	7.30-10.70	7.30-10.70	7.30-10.70
Indian Overseas Bank	7.35 #	7.35 #	7.35 #
Indian Bank	7.15-9.55	7.15-9.55	7.15-9.55
Central Bank of India	7.10-9.15	7.10-9.15	7.10-9.15
Private Sector Banks			
Kotak Mahindra Bank	7.70 #	7.70 #	7.70 #
ICICI Bank	7.65 #	7.65 #	7.65 #
Axis Bank	8.35-11.90	8.35-11.90	8.35-9.35
HSBC Bank	7.70 #	7.70 #	7.70 #
South Indian Bank	7.80 #	7.80 #	7.80 #
Karur Vysya Bank	8.50-10.65	8.50-10.65	8.50-10.65
Karnataka Bank	7.30-11.68	7.30-11.68	7.30-11.68
Federal Bank	8.75 #	8.75 #	8.75 #
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	8.15-9.50	8.15-9.50	8.15-9.50
Bandhan Bank	8.41-12.58	8.41-12.58	8.41-12.58
RBL Bank	8.20 #	8.20 #	8.20 #
CSB Bank	8.05 #	8.05 #	8.05 #
HDFC Bank	7.90 #	7.90 #	7.90 #
City Union Bank	8.25-9.50	8.50-10.00	8.75-10.50
Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)			
LIC Housing Finance	7.50 #	7.50 #	7.50 #
Bajaj Housing Finance	7.40 #	7.40 #	7.40 #
Tata Capital	7.75 #	7.75 #	7.75 #
PNB Housing Finance	7.90 #	7.90 #	7.90 #
GIC Housing Finance	8.20 #	8.20 #	8.20 #
SMFG India Home Finance	10.00 #	10.00 #	10.00 #
Sammaan Capital (Formerly Indiabulls Housing Finance)	8.75 #	8.75 #	8.75 #
Aditya Birla Capital	7.75 #	7.75 #	7.75 #
ICICI Home Finance	7.50 #	7.50 #	7.50 #
Godrej Housing Finance	7.75 #	7.75 #	7.75 #

#Onwards Rates as on December 17 Source:Paisabazaar.com

SEOUL

Japan's nuclear ambitions must be stopped 'at any cost', says N. Korea

AP

North Korea said on Sunday that Japan's nuclear ambitions "must be prevented at any cost", after a Tokyo official reportedly suggested the country should possess atomic weapons. "Japan's attempt must be prevented as it will bring mankind a great disaster," the director of the Institute for Japan Studies said. AFP

PHNOM PENH

Cambodia says Thailand border clashes displaced over half a million

AP

More than half a million people in Cambodia have been displaced by two weeks of deadly border clashes with neighbouring Thailand, Phnom Penh said on Sunday. The renewed fighting between the Southeast Asian neighbours has killed at least 22 people in Thailand and 19 in Cambodia, officials said. AFP

SYDNEY

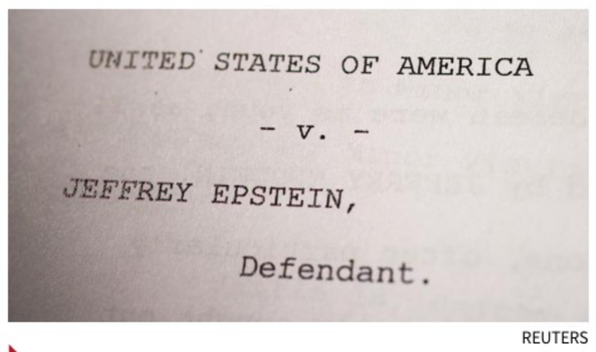
Australian PM booed at event to honour Bondi Beach victims

REUTERS

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was booed by an angry crowd gathered at the Bondi Beach on Sunday to honour the victims of a gun attack a week earlier that targeted a seaside Jewish Hanukkah festival event. Critics say that his centre-left government has not done enough to curb a surge in anti-Semitism. REUTERS

NEW YORK

At least 16 files disappear from webpage for Epstein documents



REUTERS

At least 16 files disappeared on Saturday from the Justice Department's public webpage for documents related to Jeffrey Epstein — including a photograph showing President Donald Trump — less than a day after they were posted, with no explanation from the government and no notice to the public. AP

U.S. forces stop oil tanker off coast of Venezuela again in two weeks

The move follows Trump's announcement of a blockade targeting oil tankers involved in sanctioned Venezuelan oil trade; Maduro's government slams the U.S. actions as 'criminal' and vows not to let them 'go unpunished' through legal retaliation

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. forces on Saturday stopped an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela for the second time in less than two weeks as President Donald Trump continues to ramp up pressure on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

The pre-dawn operation comes days after Mr. Trump announced a "blockade" of all sanctioned oil tankers coming in and out of the South American country and follows the December 10 seizure by American forces of an oil tanker off Venezuela's coast.

A U.S. military helicopter flies over the Panama-flagged *Centuries*, which was intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard on Saturday. REUTERS

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem confirmed that the U.S. Coast Guard, with help from the Defence Department, stopped the oil tanker that was last docked in Venezuela. She also posted on social media an unclassified video of a U.S helicopter landing personnel on a vessel called *Centuries*.

"The United States will continue to pursue the illicit movement of sanctioned oil that is used to fund narco terrorism in the region," Ms. Noem wrote on X. "We will find you, and we will stop you."

Venezuela's government in a statement characterised the U.S. forces' actions as "criminal" and vowed to not let them "go unpunished" by pursuing various legal avenues.

"The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela categorically denounces and rejects the theft and hijacking of another private vessel transporting Venezuelan oil, as well as the enforced disappearance of its crew, perpetrated by United States military personnel in international waters," according to the statement by government.

Mr. Trump, following the first tanker seizure, of a vessel named the *Skipper*, this month vowed that the U.S. would carry out a blockade of Venezuela. It all comes as Mr. Trump has ratcheted up his rhetoric toward Mr. Maduro and warned that the long-time Venezuelan leader's days in power are numbered.

The targeting of tankers comes as Mr. Trump has ordered the Defence Department to carry out a series of attacks on vessels in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific Ocean that his administration alleges are smuggling fentanyl and other illegal drugs into the United States and beyond.

Imran calls for nationwide protests after jail sentence

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan urged his supporters to gear up for countrywide protests following a 17-year jail term handed to him and wife Bushra Bibi in a corruption case.

Mr. Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi were sentenced to 17 years in jail each by a court on Saturday in the Toshakhana 2 corruption case.

Mr. Khan, 73, who has been in jail since August 2023, faces multiple cases launched against him since his ouster from power in April 2022.

The Toshakhana 2 case involves alleged fraud in state gifts that the former first couple received from the Saudi government in 2021.

Imran Khan

In a conversation with his lawyers in Adiala Jail after the "military-style trial decision," Mr. Khan urged his supporters to stand up in protest after the decision, according to a midnight statement posted on Mr. Khan's X account.

It was not known who posted his conversation on his personal account as Mr. Khan has no access to his social media handles in jail.

"I have sent a message to (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister) Sohail Afridi to prepare for the street movement. The entire nation will have to rise for its rights," he said, and added: "Struggle is worship, and I am even ready to embrace martyrdom for the true freedom of Pakistan!" He argued that the latest sentence did not come as a surprise and asked his legal team to move the High Court against the decision.

He also targeted the army's leadership for his detention, but in the same vein said that the "army is mine", showing his effort to win its support while attacking the top leadership of the armed forces.

Mr. Khan also alleged that he and wife were being "continuously subjected to mental torture by keeping us in solitary confinement".

Putin's readiness to speak with Macron 'welcome': France

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

The French presidency on Sunday welcomed that Russian President Vladimir Putin was ready to speak with Emmanuel Macron, after the French leader said Europe should reach out to Russia again over ending the war in Ukraine.

"It is welcome that the Kremlin has publicly agreed to this approach. We will decide in the coming days on the best way to proceed," the Elysee said.

The French presidency stressed, however, that any discussion with Moscow would be conducted "in full transparency" with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European allies, and that its goal remained to secure a "solid and lasting peace" for Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Mr. Putin had "expressed readiness to engage in dialogue" with his French counterpart in an interview published on Sunday.

Kremlin denies three-way talks between U.S., Ukraine and Russia in preparation

Agence France-Presse
Reuters
MIAMI/MOSCOW/KYIV

The Kremlin on Sunday denied that three-way talks between Ukraine, Russia and the United States were on the cards, as diplomats gathered in Miami for talks on ending the conflict.

A day earlier, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had said that Washington had mooted the trilateral format, which would mark Moscow and Kyiv's first face-to-face negotiations in half a year, but expressed scepticism that they would lead to progress.

"At present, no one has seriously discussed this initiative, and to my knowledge, it is not in preparation," Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov told presspersons, according to Russian news agencies. He added that changes made by the Europeans and Ukraine to U.S. proposals for an end to the war in Ukraine did not improve prospects for peace.

After revealing the U.S. three-way proposal, Mr. Zelenskyy told presspersons on Saturday that he was "not sure that anything new could come of it", and urged the United States to step up pressure on Russia to end the war.

Yuri Ushakov

But the Ukrainian leader struck a more upbeat note on Sunday, adding that "constructive" talks between U.S., European and Ukrainian negotiators were "moving at a fairly rapid pace", while cautioning that "much depends on whether Russia feels the need to end war for real".

Elsewhere, Russian forces have crossed the border with Ukraine in the north-eastern Sumy region and taken about 50 residents of Hrabovske, a Ukrainian border village, into Russia, Ukrainian media quoted the military as saying on Sunday.

Israel approves 19 new settlements in occupied West Bank

Agence France-Presse
JERUSALEM

Israel's security cabinet approved the establishment of 19 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, a move the country's far-right Finance Minister said on Sunday was aimed at preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The decision brings the total number of settlements approved over the past three years to 69, according to a statement from the office of Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

The latest approvals come days after the United Nations said the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank – all of which are considered illegal under international law – had reached its highest level since at least 2017.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has recently condemned what he described as Israel's "relentless" expansion of settlements in the occupied territory.

Sport

Minhas' 172 propels Pakistan u-19 to second Asia Cup title

Press Trust of India
DUBAI

India faltered against the big-hitting Sameer Minhas and the extra zip of pacers, suffering a massive 191-run defeat against Pakistan in a one-sided 50-over under-19 Asia Cup final, here on Sunday.

Pakistan lifted its second u-19 Asia Cup. Pakistan posted a mammoth 347 for eight, riding on Minhas' 172 (113b, 17x4, 9x6).

Ali Raza, Mohammad Sayyam and Abdul Subhan hurried the top-order as India folded up for 156 in 26.2 overs.

However, India's chase began on an explosive note despite losing Ayush Mhatre early. Vaibhav Suryavanshi hammered Raza for two sixes and a four to take 21 runs in the first over.

Minhas. ACC

But the game's course changed in the last ball of the fourth over. Aaron George was jostled into a pull by Sayyam, and all he could do was to sky the short-pitched ball to Mohammad Shayan inside the circle. In the first ball of the fifth over, India suffered a body blow with the dismissal of Suryavanshi.

India slipped from 49 for one to 49 for three in the space of two balls.

India's last hope was the presence of Abhigyan Kundu, and a drop on 12 off Subhan hinted at a possible shifting of fortune.

But all such hopes were trampled when Kundu's upper cut two balls later after his reprieve found Niqab Shafiq at third man.

The scores: Pakistan u-19 347/8 in 50 overs (Minhas 172, Hussain 56, Devendran 3/83) bt India u-19 156 in 26.2 overs (Devendran 36, Raza 4/42).

Making merry: Conway had a memorable Test. GETTY IMAGES

Conway, Latham score tons; WI chases 462

Agence France-Presse
MOUNT MAUNGANUI

The West Indies was 43 for no loss at stumps on the fourth day of the third Test against New Zealand on Sunday, needing 419 more to win, after Devon Conway became the 10th player in Test history to hit a double century and a century in the same game.

New Zealand declared its second innings an hour before the close at 306 for two with Conway's 100 adding to his 227 in the first innings.

Latham and Conway had a mammoth 323 opening partnership in the first innings, and set a world record for the opening wicket in combining for 515 runs in the match.

The scores: New Zealand 575/8 decl. & 306/2 decl. in 54 overs (Latham 101, Conway 100) vs West Indies 420 in 128.2 overs (Hodge 123 n.o. King 63, Duffy 4/86) & 43/0 in 16 overs.

Raphinha and Yamal restore Barcelona's lead at the top

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
VILA-REAL

Barcelona wingers Raphinha and Lamine Yamal guided the Catalan giant four points clear at the top of LaLiga with a 2-0 win at 10-man Villarreal on Sunday.

Barclona restored its advantage on Real Madrid, second, and won an eighth consecutive league game.

Villarreal is fourth after Atletico Madrid moved ahead of it with a 3-0 win at Girona earlier on.

Arsenal ensured it will top the Premier League at Christmas with a 1-0 win over Everton, while Liverpool survived a nervy finale to beat nine-man Tottenham 2-1 on Saturday.

Raphinha. AP

On Sunday, Morgan Rogers struck two superb goals for Aston Villa as it beat Manchester United 2-1 at hom for its seventh straight Premier League victory.

Juventus is creeping back into the Serie A title discussion after deservedly beating Roma 2-1.

The results: Premier League: Aston Villa 2 (Rogers 45, 57) bt Manchester United 1 (Cunha 45+3).

LaLiga: Girona 0 lost to Atletico Madrid 3 (Koke 13, Gallagher 38, Griezmann 90+2); Villarreal 0 lost to Barcelona 2 (Raphinha 12-pen, Yamal 63).

Bundesliga: Heidenheim 0 lost to Bayern Munich 4 (Stanisic 15, Olise 32, Diaz 86, Kane 90+2).

On Saturday: Premier League: Everton 0 lost to Arsenal 1 (Gyokeres 27-pen); Leeds 4 (Calvert-Lewin 38, 45+4, Ampadu 60, Stach 90+11) bt Crystal Palace 1 (Devenny 90+2-pen); Tottenham 1 (Richarlison 83) lost to Liverpool 2 (Isak 56, Ekitike 66).

LaLiga: Real Madrid 2 (Bellingham 38, Mbappe 86-pen) bt Sevilla 0.

Serie A: Juventus 2 (Conceicao 44, Openda 70) bt Roma 1 (Baldanzi 76).

Bundesliga: RB Leipzig 1 (Schlager 35) lost to Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Terrier 40, Schick 44, Culbreath 90+7).

TURNING HEADS

Debutant Vaishnavi makes an impression with a superb spell

K.R. DEEPAK

Vaishnavi Sharma impressed on her debut, bowling an economical spell (4-0-16-0) and keeping the Sri Lanka batters on a leash. The Gwalior-born 20-year-old left-arm spinner, who was introduced into the attack in the seventh over, was unlucky not to pick up a wicket as Shree Charani dropped Hasini Perera's catch.

SUPER SUNDAY

Smriti crosses 4000 runs in T20Is, becomes the fastest to do so

K.R. DEEPAK

Smriti Mandhana became the first Indian, and the second woman in the world, to reach the 4000-run milestone in T20Is. New Zealand's Suzie Bates (4716) is the only other batter to achieve the distinction. The left-handed opener is the quickest to reach the landmark in terms of balls faced (3227 to 3675 for Bates).

CANDID TAKE

It hurts, but we ain't going to stop: England skipper Stokes

REUTERS

That dream (of regaining the Ashes) is now over, which is incredibly disappointing. Everyone is hurting and quite emotional about it. It hurts, but we ain't going to stop. That stuff I wanted to see, I've seen that this week. I think we can take a lot from this game — England skipper Ben Stokes after the Adelaide Test.

WARM WELCOME

T20 World Cup-winning Indian blind women's team visits BCCI HQ

BCCI

The T20 World Cup-winning Indian women's blind cricket team visited the BCCI headquarters on Sunday and were welcomed by the treasurer Raghuram Bhat. "The BCCI congratulates India's captain Deepika T.C., her team and support staff for their phenomenal effort at the biggest stage," the BCCI stated.

Classy Jemimah takes India to a clinical win in opener

The No. 3 batter makes an unbeaten 44-ball 69 in a modest chase after the home bowlers keep the Lankans on a tight leash; skipper Chamari's early wicket pushes the visitor on the back foot; poor catching an area of concern for Harmanpreet & Co.

SRI LANKA IN INDIA

Anirudh Velamuri
VISAKHAPATNAM

Sri Lanka struggled to cope with an Indian side still riding the high of its ODI World Cup triumph, falling to a comprehensive eight-wicket defeat in the T20I series opener at the ACA-VDCA Stadium here on Sunday.

A stingy bowling effort followed by an effortless chase gave the 7,000-strong crowd plenty to cheer on a chilly winter evening in the port city.

Sri Lanka's fortunes, particularly in recent times, have been inextricably linked to Chamari Athapaththu's output.

True to script, India tightened its grip after sending the veteran packing.

The visitor's laboured effort culminated in a modest target of 122, one that the Women in Blue, powered by Jemimah Rodrigues' 14th T20I half-century, chased without breaking a sweat.

Put in to bat and with dew expected to set in as the evening wore on, Chamari, as usual, stepped into the aggressor role, with two boundaries off Kranti Gaud. A smart change in angle and going a touch quicker helped Kranti breach the Lankan skipper's defence to give the 22-year-old her maiden T20I wicket. It was a throwback to her dismissal of Laura Wolvaardt at the same venue during the ODI World Cup.

Pivotal role: Jemimah made it a cakewalk for the Women in Blue. K.R. DEEPAK

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA

Vishmi Gunaratne run out 39 *(43b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Chamari Athapaththu b Kranti 15 *(12b, 3x4)*, Hasini Perera c Kranti b Deepti 20 *(23b, 2x4)*, Harshitha Samarawickrama b Shree Charani 21 *(23b, 2x4)*, Nilakshika Silva run out 8 *(8b)*, Kavisha Dilhari run out 6 *(5b)*, Kaushini Nuthyangana (not out) 9 *(6b, 1x4)*; Extras (b-1, w-2): 3; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 121.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-18 (Chamari, 2.5 overs), 2-49 (Hasini, 9.1), 3-87 (Harshitha, 15.3), 4-103 (Vishmi, 17.5), 5-108 (Nilakshika, 18.3), 6-121 (Kavisha, 19.6).

INDIA BOWLING

Kranti 3-0-23-1, Arundhati 4-0-23-0, Deepti 4-1-20-1, Vaishnavi 4-0-16-0, Shree Charani 4-0-30-1, Amanjot 1-0-8-0.

INDIA

Smriti Mandhana c Nilakshika b Inoka 25 *(25b, 4x4)*, Shafali Verma c Shashini b Kawya 9 *(5b, 2x4)*, Jemimah Rodrigues (not out) 69 *(44b, 10x4)*, Harmanpreet Kaur (not out) 15 *(16b)*; Extras (nb-2, w-2): 4; Total (for two wkts. in 14.4 overs): 122.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-13 (Shafali, 1.2), 2-67 (Smriti, 8.1).

SRI LANKA BOWLING

Malki 2-0-19-0, Kawya 3-0-20-1, Chamari 2-0-16-0, Shashini 2-0-32-0, Inoka 3.4-0-17-1, Kavisha 2-0-18-0.

Toss: India; **PoM:** Jemimah.
India won by eight wickets with 32 deliveries remaining to lead five-match series 1-0.
Second T20I: December 23, Visakhapatnam, 7 p.m.

Throughout 2025, Suryakumar – who has himself struggled for runs, particularly against pace – and Tilak Varma were shuffled between the No. 3 and No. 4 positions. On occasions, Dube and Axar Patel were also tried in the middle-order. Suryakumar's statement now suggests a more settled approach. Tilak, who had featured at No. 3 in India's last two T20Is, returned to his preferred position in the third T20I against South Africa after a gap of 10 months and 13 matches.

Suryakumar also underlined that India would prioritise fielding its best XI in the five-match T20I series against New Zealand.

"We will be having a similar type of playing XI that will definitely play in the T20 World Cup. As you can see, Rinku Singh has come in. Ishan (Kishan) has come in. Whoever gets an opportunity, whoever starts, obviously, they will get a long run."

Deepti Sharma contained the damage by sending her back in the next over.

Vice-captain Harshitha Samarawickrama, who survived a leg-before appeal early, took charge as Vishmi Gunaratne struggled at the other end.

Shree Charani dropped another sitter, this time off Arundhati Reddy's bowling, to give Harshitha another life.

Shree Charani redeemed herself in the best way as the left-arm spinner beat a sweeping Harshitha with a faster delivery to rattle her stumps.

Vishmi's instincts to inject urgency into the Lankan innings kicked in too late. She struck the only six of the innings, although Smriti Mandhana's botched attempt to catch the ball had a big role in it.

Kawya Kavindi removed Shafali Verma early, but it barely dented India's charge. Jemimah – who finished with a sublime unbeaten 69 – first combined with Smriti and then with Harmanpreet Kaur to give the host the lead with 32 balls to spare.

While Jemimah's sprightly scoring and strike rotation make her the perfect No. 3 anchor, this match-winning innings should seal that spot in her favour as India seeks to finalise its XI for the T20 World Cup in England next summer.

Job done: The Australian players are ecstatic after clinching the series. GETTY IMAGES

Australia quells England's spirited challenge, keeps urn

THE ASHES

Agence France-Presse
ADELAIDE

Dominant Australia collected the last four wickets it needed on Sunday to win the third Test and retain the Ashes in just 11 days of cricket.

England's dogged resistance on day five at the Adelaide Oval lasted into the second session before Scott Boland removed Josh Tongue for an 82-run victory.

The touring side needed a win to keep the five-match series alive after being crushed by eight wickets at Perth and Brisbane.

But despite showing more grit, it was again outplayed by an Australian team which suffered a setback with spin wizard Nathan Lyon hurting his hamstring and hobbling off. Chasing 435 was always going to be a huge challenge, but England at least gave it a crack as it got to 352. Its demise in just 11 days is the joint-second quickest in more than a century since the 1921 Ashes series was completed in eight days.

England resumed on 207 for six with Will Jacks on 11 and Jamie Smith on two. When Mitchell Starc took the new ball, Smith began hitting out and it proved his downfall when he skied to Pat Cummins at midwicket.

Jacks produced his highest Test score of 47 and steered England's chase below 100. But he fell to another spectacular catch from Marnus Labuschange, diving to his left in front of wicketkeeper Alex Carey after an edge off Starc. Starc struck again to send Jofra Archer packing before Boland took out Tongue, sparking huge celebrations.

SCOREBOARD

Australia —1st Innings: 371.
England — 1st Innings: 286.
Australia — 2nd Innings: 349.
England — 2nd Innings (Target 435): Zak Crawley st. Carey b Lyon 85, Ben Duckett c Labuschagne b Cummins 4, Ollie Pope c Labuschagne b Cummins 17, Joe Root c Carey b Cummins 39, Harry Brook b Lyon 30, Ben Stokes b Lyon 5, Jamie Smith c Cummins b Starc 60, Will Jacks c Labuschagne b Starc 47, Brydon Carse (not out) 39, Jofra Archer c Weatherald b Starc 3, Josh Tongue c Labuschagne b Holland 1; Extras (b-4, lb-14, nb-3, w-1): 22; Total (in 102.5 overs): 352.
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-31, 3-109, 4-177, 5-189, 6-194, 7-285, 8-337, 9-349.
Australia bowling: Starc 17-3-62-3, Cummins 17-4-48-3, Boland 17.5-5-35-1, Lyon 25-6-77-3, Green 10-0-44-0, Head 15-3-61-0, Labuschagne 1-0-7-0.

India to do away with left-right obsession, Tilak to bat at No. 3

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

The game of musical chairs employed by India's men's team – particularly in T20Is – has baffled connoisseurs and aficionados alike. The team management has, over the last 18 months, repeatedly cited the need for a 'flexible' middle-order, often driven by the preference for maintaining a left-right batting combination through the middle overs.

India captain Suryakumar Yadav, however, hinted at a significant shift in that thinking, suggesting that not just the openers but even the No. 3 and No. 4 slots are now set to remain constant.

"We have come to a point where I, Gauti *bhai* (head coach Gautam Gambhir) and others now feel that lefty-righty combination is not always required. [In Ahmedabad] we saw Hardik batted brilliantly against left-arm spin, so that is slightly overrated," Suryakumar said on Saturday, addressing the media shortly after India's squad for the T20 World Cup and the preceding five-match T20I series against New Zealand was announced.

Tilak. FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

"Now we seem to have settled on Tilak (Varma) being comfortable with that [No. 3] position, and I will play at No. 4. Five and six will depend on the situation – Hardik or (Shivam) Dube – but Tilak is comfortable with No. 3."

GCL: Continental Kings storm into third straight title clash

P.K. Ajith Kumar
MUMBAI

Hou Yifan hadn't exactly set the Arabian Sea – just a stone's throw away from her hotel – on fire during the first half of the Global Chess League. She just won one of her six games, drew two and lost three.

Since then, she has won three games on the trot, two of them on Sunday, in front of another full house at the Royal Opera House. Her splendid show, with black pieces in both games, has brightened the chances of her team Alpine SG Pipers making it to the final.

The two match victories have taken the SG Pipers to the second spot on the table. They now have 15 match points and 78 game points, but are behind the Triveni Continental Kings. The two-time defending champion made it to the final yet again, with a match to spare, after its 14-5 victory against Ganges Grandmasters. It has 21 match points and 92 game points.

Rivalry renewed: Yifan outwitted Humpy. GCL

Three teams are going into the last day of league on 12 match points - Mumba Masters (83 game points), Ganges Grandmasters (71) and Alaskan Knights (62).

The results: upGrad Mumba Masters lost to PBG Alaskan Knights 8-10 (Maxime Vachier-Lagrave bt D. Gukesh,;Wesley So drew with Arjun Erigaisi, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov lost to Leinier Dominguez; Koneru Humpy drew with Kateryna Lagno; D. Harika lost to Sarasadat Khademalsharieh; Bardiya Daneshvar bt Daniel Dardha)
Fyers American Gambits lost to Alpine SG Pipers 7-8 (Hikaru Nakamura drew with Fabiano Caruana; Vladislav Artmiev drew with Anish Giri; Richard Rapport drew with R. Praggnanandhaa; Bibisara Assaubayeva lost to Hou Yifan; Teodora Injac drew with Nino Batsiashvili; Volodar Murzin bt Leon Mendonca).
Ganges Grandmasters lost to Triveni Continental Kings 5-14 (Viswanathan Anand lost to Alireza Firouzja; Vincent Keymer drew with Wei Yi; Jovakhir Sindarov bt Vidit Gujrathi; Polina Shuvalova lost to Zhu Jiner; Stavroula Tsolakidou lost to Alexandra Kosteniuk; Raunak Sadhwani drew with MarcAndria Maurizzi).
upGrad Mumba Masters lost to Alpine SG Pipers 7-8 (Vachier-Lagrave drew with Caruana; So drew with Giri; Mamedyarov drew with Praggnanandhaa; Humpy lost to Hou; Harika drew with Batsiashvili; Daneshvar bt Mendonca).
(The writer is in Mumbai at the invitation of Tech Mahindra).

Sara's bold move beyond the board

P.K. Ajith Kumar
MUMBAI

Sarasadat Khademalsharieh, or Sara Khadem as she is better known these days, is not your usual chess player. She defied her government in Iran and made a bold statement: she played an international tournament without wearing the mandatory headscarf, or hijab. She has had to pay a price for that. An arrest warrant was issued against her in Iran, but she was granted Spanish nationality. She is now living in and plays for Spain.

Sara is here in Mumbai, playing for PBG Alaskan Knights at the Global Chess League.

"In the league's first edition, I was a reserve player and came in the middle of the tournament," Sara told *The Hindu*.

She is impressed by the huge strides India has made in chess. "It was remarkable that India won both the men's and women's titles at the Olympiad last year," said Sara. "My team, Spain, had tied for third place." Before that, she had, of course, represented Iran.

Sara Khadem. GCL

Looking back at her decision to play the 2022 World rapid and blitz championship, that was something she wanted to do after the death of Masha Amini. "Earlier I had this sort of mixed feeling about this whole thing, but many of my friends were being part of the protest in their own ways and were taking serious risks," she said. "When I got invited to this tournament, I didn't want to go there wearing a scarf and making a move." It was her first time without a scarf in a public event.

INBRIEF

Japanese striker 'King Kazu' to play on at the age of 58

Evergreen 58-year-old striker Kazuyoshi Miura is set to join a Japanese third-division team Fukushima United to begin his 41th season as a professional footballer, local media reported on Sunday. Miura, known as "King Kazu", spent last season with fourth-tier Atletico Suzuka.

Sindhu raring to go after forced break

The 30-year-old multiple Olympic medallist says she has worked on her skills and overall game under the guidance of coach Irwansyah

BADMINTON

Tarun Shastry
CHENNAI

India's ace shuttler and multiple Olympic medallist P.V. Sindhu, who endured a relatively subdued 2025 season due to injuries, said she is now match-fit and raring to go.

The forced break, Sindhu revealed, proved beneficial as it allowed her to work on her skills and overall game under the guidance of Indonesian Irwansyah Adi Pratama who is the Indian women's singles coach.

In a media interaction on the sidelines of a store launch, the 30-year-old reflected on the importance of staying physically and mentally strong.

She highlighted how time away from competitive badminton allowed her to reassess her training methods, fitness routines and tournament planning.

"Firstly, I am in a good mental space now, and everything is progressing in the right direction," said Sindhu.

Need to be smarter

"Obviously, I have to be a little smarter in terms of the kind of training I do, the fitness routines I follow and the exercises I choose.

"You have to be smart enough to make the right decisions. It becomes crucial to select which tournaments to play and which ones to skip. That is very important," she said.

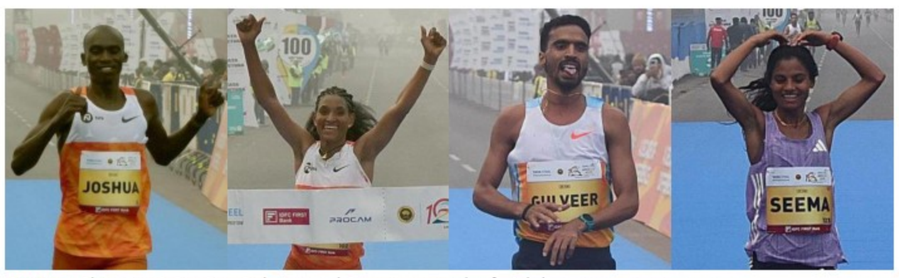
"Every day is a new learning experience. There are always new strokes, new skills and new aspects to learn.

"For me, it is imperative to stay strong both mentally and physically, and I'm focusing on progressing one step at a time," Sindhu added.

Success mantra: Sindhu reckons it is imperative to stay strong both mentally and physically. R. RAGU

Convincing wins for Uganda's Cheptegei and Ethiopia's Degitu in Tata Steel World 25k

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA



On top: Cheptegei, Degitu, Gulveer and Seema cross the finish line. DEBASISH BHADURI

Uganda's 5,000m and 10,000m World Record holder Joshua Cheptegei and Ethiopia's Degitu Azimeraw convincingly took the men's and women's crowns, while Gulveer Singh and Seema, the best home runners, rewrote Indian event records in the 10th Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata here on Sunday.

In his 'second home,' double Olympic champion Cheptegei clocked 1:11:49 to beat current World marathon champion Alphonce Simbu for a prize-money of $15,000.

Degitu, meanwhile, timed 1:19:36 to spoil Sutume Kebede's plans for a hat-trick of titles. She reclaimed the top spot after eight years.

Following a pre-dawn start, Cheptegei maintained his place among the leaders before clinically steering clear in the final stages. "This victory gives me confidence for my next marathon," said Cheptegei.

Defying stiff legs, Degitu led the race at the 10km, 15km and 20km marks before taking a decisive lead around 22km.

Gulveer timed 1:12:06 despite an altered and challenging course. He kept pace with the leading pack of east African runners till 40-odd minutes before lowering his own record of 1:14:10 set last year.

Gulveer, who finished a creditable overall fifth, bagged the winner's cheque of ₹3,00,000 and an event record bonus of ₹1,00,000. "Records come with consistency. There are no shortcuts," said Gulveer.

Second-placed Harmanjot was 10th overall.

Dominating the race, World University Games silver medallist Seema registered 1:26:04 to break L. Suriya's 2017 record of 1:26:53 to be the first among Indian women and 10th overall. Defending champion Sanjivani Jadhav was a distant second.

The results: International: Men: 1. Joshua Cheptegei (Uga) 1:11:49, 2. Alphonce Simbu (Tan) 1:11:56, 3. Tebello Ramakongoana (Lso) 1:11:59. **Women:** 1. Degitu Azimeraw (Eth) 1:19:36, 2. Sutume Kebede (Eth) 1:20:28, 3. Meselech Alemayehu (Eth) 1:20:48. **Indian: Men:** 1. Gulveer Singh 1:12:06, 2. Harmanjot Singh 1:15:11, 3. Sawan Barwal 1:15:25. **Women:** 1. Seema 1:26:04, 2. Sanjivani Jadhav 1:30:34, 3. Nirmaben Thakor 1:32:02.

KARNATAKA ROUND-UP

Sports quota appointments in first week of January: CM

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, on Sunday, stated that orders for appointing sportspersons to government positions under sports quota will be issued in the first week of January. Despite there being a provision for reservation of 3% in the Police and Forest departments, and 2% in all other departments, recruitment had slowed down. Speaking at the function organised to present the Karnataka Olympic Association (KOA) awards for the year 2025, Siddaramaiah said that appointments will soon happen.

On the day, 14 current athletes and three veterans were presented with the KOA accolade that carries a cash prize of ₹1 lakh.

The awardees: B. Unnathi Aiyappa (athletics), Ayush Shetty (aadminton), Pratyanshu Tomar (basketball), S. Tanvi (fencing), M. Nikhil Raj (football), Pranavi S. Urs (golf), Uday Naidu (gymnastics), V. Aishwarya (kayaking & canoeing), S.D. Prajwal Dev (tennis), Jagdeep Dayal (hockey), Sujan (netball), T.S. Divya (rifle shooting), Akash Mani (swimming), K.J. Aakash (table tennis), P.S. Zarina (basketball veteran), Mukund Killekar (boxing veteran), V.S. Vinaya (hockey veteran), Sathish Basavaraj (photography).

Proud moment: Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with the Karnataka Olympic Association awardees in Bengaluru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Karnataka enters quarterfinals

Kashvi Kandi Kuppa's century (115 n.o.) set up Karnataka's 27-run win over Madhya Pradesh in the BCCI U-19 Women's One-Day Trophy in Hyderabad on Sunday. With five wins out of five, an unbeaten Karnataka has qualified for the quarterfinals.

The scores: Karnataka 264/6 in 50 overs (Rachitha Hatwar 56, Kashvi Kandi Kuppa 115 n.o., Karnika Karthick 40) bt Madhya Pradesh 237/7 in 50 overs.

Siddhanth, Sakshya emerge champions

M. Siddhanth and Sakshya Santhosh emerged the under-13 boys' and girls' singles champions, respectively, at the CVL Shastry Memorial State table tennis on Sunday. Sakshya also won the hopes girls' singles crown.

The results: U-13: Boys: M. Siddhanth bt Arnav Mithun 11-6, 11-5, 12-14, 11-3; **Girls:** Sakshya Santhosh bt Lakshmi Aashritha 12-14, 13-11, 12-10, 11-1.

Hopes: Boys: Arnav bt Sharvil Karambelkar 14-12, 11-7, 10-12, 13-11; **Girls:** Sakshya bt Tamanna Nerlaje 11-5, 11-2, 9-11, 11-4.

LIVE TELECAST

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